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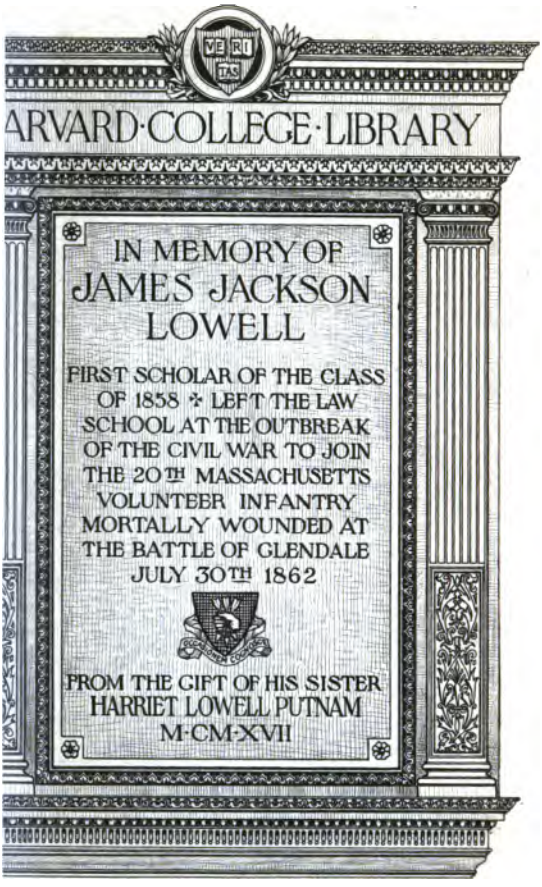
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AUSTRALIA

AS IT REALLY IS.

AUSTRALIA

AS IT REALLY IS,

IN ITS LIFE, SCENERY, & ADVENTURE:

WITH THE CHARACTER, HABITS, AND CUSTOMS OF ITS ABORIGINAL INHABITANTS, AND THE PROSPECTS AND EXTENT OF ITS

GOLD FIELDS.

BY

F. ELDERSHAW,

A RESIDENT AND AN EYE-WITNESS OF THE FACTS RECORDED

"Born to no party, of no sect am I,
I can't be silent, and I will not lie!

LONDON:
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CONTENTS.

SKETCHES

OF

LIFE, SCENERY, AND ADVENTURE,

IN

AUSTRALIA.

No. 1.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE sadly-waning prospects of family affairs—a miserable necessity for retrenchment—the horrid bore of having at the age of twenty-one to begin to get my own living—and the difficulty of attaining that object in a community so thronged as England with fellow-competitors in the race for life—were among the most important considerations which directed my attention to the subject of Emigration.

In the majority of similar cases ill health is, perhaps, the most fashionable motive to assign, and, indeed, I "enjoyed" enough of this to justify the customary plea; for England—moist, foggy, dear Old England!—does not possess precisely the climate best adapted for pulmonary predelictions; but, if the truth must be told, poverty! unpopular poverty! and the plebeian hope of being able to better my worldly condition, were the real moving causes which urged this important subject seriously upon my attention.

And first—among the ever-ready difficulties that wait to thrust themselves between a new-formed project and its accomplishment, stalked gauntly the consideration of ways and means; the where? and how? of this indefinite resolution. Various places at the outset of enquiries after an eligible home, are almost sure to suggest themselves to one's anxious but hesitating thoughts. A resolute wrestle with the perplexing abundance of these allurements is a duty not to be postponed, or Robinson Crusoe, and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments—with all their world-wide invitations of delight—can hardly more effectually unsettle the imagination than will these mental wanderings over earth's chosen Paradises. These, however, are difficulties firmly to be met, and then they are easily vanquished.

In my own case they speedily resolved themselves into more tangible form, and America and Australia, as offering in greatest abundance the desired advantages, severally occupied the scales. In this state of still comparative indecision, I read all the books I could obtain descriptive of the respective countries, and consulted numerous of the eulogising pamphlets, official and itinerary, which at that time abounded on the prospects and advantages of Emigration.

By such means I gradually narrowed my choice to New South Wales or Canada, and finally decided on the former, the latter having held, I confess, the scales of opinion long upon the poise; but its terrible winter, and the annual stagnation of existence it occasions, in spite of all the violent stimulants with which society is forced to indulge, in mitigation of those rigours, contributed at last its weight to the balance in favour of the more genial climate of New South

Wales, and thitherward turned the beam, for better or worse, for ever.

Now whatever you happen to do in this contradictory world, there is always an opposition to be established to the course you are pursuing.—"There's all'ays a sumthin," as the Dustman complained to the Scavenger when he left his "Hopera glass in a cab;" and it follows, therefore, that such considerations as these must necessarily, in some way, or by somebody or other, be thought erroneous; and, accordingly, I find that Montesquieu is eloquently perplexing upon the doctrine of the moral influence of climate; and the great Machiavel is almost as particularly impressive on the political advantages of desolation and sterility; in which case it is very apparent to my mind, that I have been most unfortunate in selecting for my home such a delightful climate and country as New South Wales—a land where Ceres and Pomona are ever bounteous to reward the welcome hand of toil; a veritable land of promise, flowing with milk and honey!—"A land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates,—a land of oil, olives, and honey."

Possibly it may be improper to court the enjoyment of all or any of these apparent blessings; it may even be highly beneficial to submit to have your liver grilled under the fierce radiance of meridian suns, or your extremities truncated beneath the frozen blasts of a bleak arctic zone; but to such as, like myself, are neither disposed to put implicit faith in curious philosophical speculations, nor possess the Spartan-like ambition to exemplify in *propria persona* how much of Nature's rigours the Anglo-Saxon carcase can endure, the allurements of the Tropics and the Poles will,

I think, be easily resisted, and the apparent advantage of these intermediate and more temperate regions, selfishly perhaps, preferred.

I can scarcely entertain a doubt, that there are thousands, aye, hundreds of thousands, at home, (for even in this distant spot we still habituate ourselves to designate that well-loved Fatherland our home,) who are somewhat similarly circumstanced at like periods of uncertainty—thrown young and unexpectedly upon the struggling world, without the threshold of active life, unfixed in habits or pursuits, and doubtful out of the many choked-up and zig-zag paths towards fame and fortune, which path to choose—which course to steer their youthful barque, freighted with buoyant hopes—or how even to set sail preliminary to their voyage for that wished-for haven, where hopes like theirs are realized. If there are any such,—and I repeat, I cannot doubt but they form a most important item in England's crowded population—for them chiefly I write, and among them, at least, I hope to find sympathising if not numerous readers.

In explanation of the nature of my projected volume, I beg to state, that the main object of the various descriptive Sketches which constitute its contents, is decidedly *to amuse*, but at the same time to convey the means of information with that entertainment—information, however, not of the dry, self-evident, or practical kind, with which the usual "HINTS TO EMIGRANTS" "THE YOUNG MAN'S GUIDE TO THE COLONIES," &c. teem; and which statistical revelations, though hawked about by pure Caucasian vendors in perplexing variety, are indeed matters not to be despised; but information theoretical and descriptive, drawn from the

stores of individual experience, and served up as palatably as possible for general edification. In other words, my immediate desire in sketching LIFE, SCENERY, AND ADVENTURE IN AUSTRALIA," is, to show, through the medium of my own experiences, as much as I am able of the country itself, and particularly of that portion of the interior called the "BUSH," in connection with the ordinary avocations among which we live and move in these Antipodean regions; affording by such means to any one who is desirous of gathering information on subjects of this nature an opportunity of picking out something, even perhaps serviceable, from the dress of amusement in which it has been my endeavour to present them. And what I am particularly anxious of impressing upon the attention of my readers of the class for whom I write, is, that it is in the power of any amongst them who choose, and have energy enough to strike out a course for themselves, to realize the actua substance of that, concerning which these few brief Sketches are but types or shadows.

Not unmindful am I of the contempt your *dilettante* traveller assumes towards Sketches so scientifically unprofitable. That vast abnormal Continent presents, says such an one, a varied field for study to the lover of Geological, Chemical, or Mineralogical pursuits. Its Aborigines, Marsupials, Insects, and Feathered Bipeds, are the delight of the Ornithologist, the Ethnologist, the Naturalist, and the Entomologist; its indigenous vegetation is an endless treat to the student of Botany; but, unhappily, I am not disposed to be narratically scientific, and beyond a slight but faithful sketch of the extensive Gold Fields recently discovered in our western

interior, the realms of scientific travel will be scrupulously avoided. I am even willing to own the soft impeachment which this evident indisposition may possibly suggest; nay, absolutely to go the length of assuming that I am not fitted with optics geological—that it has never been my happy fortune to discover some indisputably new and indescribably proportioned *Caleopterous* specimen; that I have, perhaps, been signally unsuccessful in endeavouring to trace back antecedent to Noah, the undeveloped germ of an almost imperceptible but singularly interesting plant—and that my efforts toward the formation of a better and more intimate acquaintance with some comically-abortive and unusually-tentaculated *Holothuria* may possibly have failed to obtain their due appreciation and reward:—Be all this as it may, I am content quietly to adhere to my original design of writing what I have to write, as Sir Walter Scott says,—"without any botheration of Statistics or Geology"—and in that which I propose, as far as I am individually concerned, I profess no higher aim, in loving nature and its wildest scenes, than the gratification of a keen love of sport, and the free enjoyment of that delicious non-restraint and ever-varying excitement, which, to a congenial spirit, the wide Australian "*Bush*" so peculiarly and satisfactorily affords. Let the man of science pursue his proud and eminently useful career, but let us not deny ourselves the privilege of an occasional dissipation. There are two things, says D'Alembert, that can reach the top of a pyramid; the eagle and the reptile; let each take its allotted course: the gaol which the pride of a Diogenes might miss, the ambition of an Alexander may attain,

But, indeed, defensively of the mere Bushman, and his own peculiar art, when far away in the most distant wilds, —hungry, thirsty, faint with toil and anxiety—I must say that I should like to see the Geologist; I speak without disparagement to that pre-eminently useful science. Who than the practised Bushman scans with eye more true, or with judgment more discriminating, the features and formation of the country through which he bends his steps. The camel's wondrous instinct saves, where science would avail but little.

I am fully aware, also, that another class of cavillers with these merely descriptive Sketches, is not difficult of discovery in your travelled fop; an imitative animal, who sees no object to admire, who knows no subject worthy of recording apart from the beaten ground of "Classic Italy;" or, at any rate, away from the historical haunts of European importance or celebrity. Let me not for a moment be supposed to object to those fascinating subjects, or to deem that they could ever possibly be uninteresting, or too severely hacknied or hard worn; they, I conceive, must always awaken fresh inspirations of instruction or delight in whatever form they are developed; but it is the prosy *ennui* of the everlasting Tourist—not the poetry of art, nor the benignant region of its birth—that nauseates, and makes one fain to hold in light esteem the imperious dictum of those narrow-minded worshippers of Nature.

I, too, can love the eminently grand or the sublime, and lose no trait of awe and admiration by the contrasts which amidst other scenes in Nature's wide domain are ever opening to the view. The towering Pyrenees, the Himalaya, and

the Andes, are no greater objects of admiring wonder than are either the appalling desert wastes of Africa, or the luxuriant plains of Orinoco and Venezuela. The awe which one peculiar feature of Nature inspires is not to be measured only by comparisons like these, or with other scenes of even approximating grandeur. The European, with his boundless plains, still views appalled the trackless deserts of Sahara. The hunter of the Alps, who from a child has trod the sides of hoar Mont Blanc, or watched the eternal glaciers in his mountain home, may still gaze with awe and admiration upon the peaks of Dwalaghiri, Chimborazzo, or Pichincha. The most ardent and intrepid lover of the terrible wonders of Etna, of Vesuvius, of Hecla, or of Teneriffe—the most devoted admirer of the sublime devastations of Alpine Torrents, Avalanches, and Debacles, despite his practised coolness and experience, must still, in trembling admiration, stand appalled before the mightier and more terrible irruptions of Pasto, Hironcea, or Cotapaxi.

Our scenes in this less rugged country are certainly not of this magnificent order, and I sincerely hope, that in alluding to such stupendous contrasts as these, and attempting to draw attention to the less strongly-developed but still remarkable features as here exhibited, I may not be misunderstood as adopting the small conceit, or to be arguing even defensively of the London Cockney's egotism, who persisted in his opinion, that Primrose Hill was wonderfully superior to the Jungfrau, and the road over Shooter's Hill (another favoured locality,) was, without doubt, of infinitely better construction than the boasted passage of the Simplon. It is not my object to draw comparisons at

all; I merely desire to express my conviction of the egregious folly of overlooking the advantages we possess, because, forsooth, other countries may happen to possess them in a grander or more perfect form. This infant land of my adoption is, in the polite and scientific literature of the world, as yet comparatively unknown; but to such as can admire whatever in itself may happen to be admirable,—who can burst that mental thraldom which is limited to view with morbid sympathy those elements of nature, or those wondrous productions of man's genius and toil, only as fashion may have stamped their worth, or deemed their subjects classical—to such these attempts to please may not, I hope, be altogether unsuccessful.

In subsequent papers, then, and in detail, I design offering a series of "Sketches of Life, Scenery, and Adventure in Australia," prefacing them with a brief narrative of my voyage out, occasionally interpolating them as I proceed with descriptive anecdotes, and concluding with as clear and explanatory an account as my means will permit, of a four months' visit to the Gold Fields of Australia.

No. 2. THE VOYAGE OUT.

In submitting a brief narrative of my voyage from London to Sydney, I beg, at once, to preface this mere fragment of a "Log" by claiming the utmost latitude which that peculiar species of nautical journal will admit; and of assuring my readers that they need apprehend none of the accustomed strings of dates, nor any of those painfully-accurate notations of latitude and longitude, with which some travellers beguile their own *ennui*, to inflict it mercilessly on others.

Such mere matters of nautical business always appeared to me to be totally devoid of general interest, however necessary they might seem to the navigator; and although I have observed the nervous anxiety displayed by some sea-voyagers, to ascertain in most minute detail, from each of the authorities of the ship, the whole particulars of their immediate whereabout on the wide world of waters as this denoted; and have marked the evident satisfaction diurnally manifested when duly apprised they were safe and sound in lat. 27 something, and in lon. 127 nothing, I could never bring myself to believe, that any person not immediately concerned in the consequences of such dull, dry facts, could possibly derive the smallest satisfaction from their narration. I have, accordingly, taken the liberty of entirely overlooking them, and have only endeavoured to note down for others' amsuement such matters, trifling or grave, as served to interest me then, and which will help, I trust, to make their reproduction tolerable now.

It was in the month of October, during the prevalence of strong north-westerly winds, that the good ship, ———

left London for Sidney, New South Wales. I refrain from mentioning the name of the vessel, only because I have no authority from my fellow-passengers for bringing them before the public, and conceive myself, therefore, by implied conventional confidence, bound to be so far mysterious.

I had been kept waiting, dodging about, as a matter of course, for two or three weeks in town, expecting daily the vessel's departure; and when at last she did sail, I was just in time, as is also usual, I believe, to see her leave the docks without me. The magnificent river steamers, however, put all fear of overtaking her out of the question; and, accordingly, accompanied by my father, who, dear, kind, old friend, still hovered on my departing steps, as if the coming event of our long separation had cast its warning shadows before, and whispered to his affectionate forebodings that that parting was for ever. Alas! that such it should have been! At Gravesend we overtook the vessel, and the final adieu to that affectionate parent, his hurried, earnest words of hope and comfort; his strong but quivering parting grasp, and long and loving farewell look, that spoke the apprehensions which his lips, in kindness to the hopes of youth, forebore to utter,—are living memories treasured in my heart, to hallow the remembrance of that sad farewell.

Such, however, is the course of life; the miserable experience of every day's existence. Man builds up hopes through years of anxious care, for moments such as these to blast for ever!

"Oh! there is something in the feeling,
And trembling falter of the hand;
And something in the tear down stealing,
And voice, so broken and so bland—
And something in the mute farewell,
That worketh like a powerful spell."

Our vessel was a long, narrow, pretty-looking barque, (I describe her, of course, as a landsman,) but exceedingly wet and uneasy to travel in; and a very short time after we passed the Nore, the impression respecting her uneasiness of motion became materially strengthened in most of our minds. My fellow-passengers numbered nine in the cabin and twelve in the steerage, being all young, and bound on the one main chance of bettering our condition, with two exceptions, and these having taken to themselves wives, had of course arrived at the ultimatum of worldly happiness, and only took the pleasant little trip of sixteen thousand miles for change of air, and gentle and invigorating exercise; at least such was the ostensible motive of their voyage.

Our skipper was a rough, not to say sulky-looking, Scotchman, whose apparent occupation on board consisted chiefly of chewing tobacco, and shouting vociferously; and whose amusements, without partaking of the convivial, inclined decidedly towards a copious indulgence in brandy and water; in other respects, like his Satanic majesty, our friend the skipper was not so black as limners sometimes delineate him. He invariably tried to make himself agreeable after an uncouth fashion of his own, and was really at times said to be both a good sailor, and what is generally understood by the designation of a "good fellow;" but of the correct interpretation of which various conflicting opinions were from time to time current among us. Still, with every confidence in his nautical skill,—for he roared like a hurricane and cursed unaccountably—we could not but perceive, that immediately upon our getting out into green water, there was

something wrong somewhere. For a time we affected to make light of matters in general, accounting for the singular heaviness of our hearts by tender recollections of the past, or by our untried prospects looming dimly in the future. In this uneasy state of mind we passed Herne Bay, (that scene of many a youthful ducking,) when it very soon became apparent that not only our hearts, but our viscera, also, were out of order; and that, too, to a degree which admitted of little or no compromise with the affections; so, after the usual attempts, facetious, philosophical, and superstitious, to account for certain serious effects, as arising from certain simple causes, we gradually hugged ourselves in gloomy solitude, and, one by one, in limp and languid state, disappeared, none knowing exactly where the other had gone, and few caring for anything in this sublunary sphere but for the presence of some kind soul in the shape of a Steward, to listen to his last ravings of despair, and to render other timely aid in this season of distress.

About nine o'clock at night, a dirty little imp of a cabin boy routed me out of what he called the "lee scuppers," to which moist and uncomfortable position I must have betaken myself in a severe fit of abstraction, for I have no recollection how I got there. He came charged with the comforting but highly indecorous assurance, that we had "reached" round the Foreland, that some filthy old seaman, named Luff, was "heaving the lead," and that we were all going to "bring up" directly in the Downs. I was exceedingly annoyed and indeed disgusted at hearing this unmannerly little brute indulge his coarse taste with the use of such filthy terms, but restraining my anger

(which was just then not difficult,) I quietly desired him to leave me alone, and when next he might have occasion to address me, to avoid as far as possible the unwarrantable use of such indelicate expressions. But he would not let me alone; the mischievous little wretch seemed rather amused than otherwise at my placid wrath: some ropes were wanted, too, and there was something about anchors and hawsers that were in the way, which brought upon me the combined attack of several savage-looking sea-monsters, who tumbled me up on to the poop, like a bag of old clothes; where after the occurrence of an immense row all over the ship, accompanied with even more than the usual amount of cursing and swearing, a most mysterious and abrupt lull took place, and I began to feel somewhat more at ease; and sundry other dark corners of the poop giving simultaneous tokens of concealed existence, it became apparent that a change for the better had come over us, and that, in fact, we were at anchor off Deal. This circumstance was shortly announced officially by one of the mates, who, as it seemed to me, in a most unnecessary fit of boisterous merriment, congratulated us severally upon our hearty appearance; and the fellow looked as jolly, if one might judge from superficial observation, as if he really thought we had been enjoying ourselves prodigiously.

That night I passed in melancholy misery, "*All in the Downs*," in every acceptation of the phrase. The bare idea of undergoing any more of what I had had a dose of that day, was like a nightmare of the heaviest description. Those fair and hopeful promises in the distant land I sought vanished before the overwhelming reminiscences of the near

and dear old home, from which, like a deserter in the hour of trial, I was selfishly escaping; and in the gloomy silence of my horrid little den (for which I had foolishly paid ninety pounds for the privilege of inhabiting,) the shadows of coming events grew dark and dim, and I experienced, for the first time in my life, the wretchedness of desolation.

But morning came at last, a welcome though a boisterous day,—for night has horrors for the sick at heart, which nothing like the blessed light of day dispels—and with the morning came also the doleful intelligence that the wind was dead a-head, and that we were not likely to leave the Downs that day. Accordingly, we called forth a spirit from the vasty deep, into which it had the foregone night retired, and betook ourselves to shore, where we passed the day much after the ordinary fashion indulged in by sailors, to which character we had not otherwise much title: however, live and learn. We passed a week in this style of existence, during which time we made considerable progress in nautical acquirements, and might, perhaps, from our extensive talk on maritime affairs, and profuse exhibition of navy caps and anchor buttons, have been taken by the uninitiated for genuine mariners.

But the wind veered at last; and, in company with a fine fleet of vessels of all nations, bound east, west, north, south, we made a start down Channel in that zig-zag style of progression called "*tacking;*" a method of sailing which, we were informed, is accounted very useful in its way, but which is really anything but agreeable to those who are not accustomed to it. "*Experto crede.*" It was soon manifest, from the blue looks and livid and purple hue assumed by each

face, that the marine intelligence which we had so rapidly acquired while lying off Deal, was of very small service to us under the tremendous churning operation to which we were now subjected. The result was unpleasant in the extreme, and may be better conceived than described. I have a faint recollection of endeavouring to agree with somebody, that the beating about of so many gallant vessels all around us was a most magnificent sight; but never having been much of a connoiseur of sea-views, except when seen from *terra firma*, which makes the greatest possible difference in the matter, I retain a far more vivid remembrance of the overwhelming sensations caused by the eccentric movements of our own ship, which quite destroyed the pleasing effect of the graceful undulations of our neighbours.

The remembrance of the feelings then endured reminds me that we had a doctor on board, (a sort of half-tamed Irish medical student,) who, under the general emergency alluded to, precribed an internal application of rum hot; but as he, although apparently suffering under the same complaint, was devoting himself strenuously to brandy cold, I thought it prudent to take Cognac also, not merely in deference to the admitted superiority of example to precept, but in conformity with an individual preference for the latter beverage. And such it ultimately appeared was the bent of our Medico's own taste, who, (if he had a failing,) exhibited throughout the voyage a rather decided partiality for that potent liquid. Having applied a moderate dose of the invaluable specific without its contributing in any way to the desired effect, I retired into my cabin, threw off my silk-trimmed jacket with ineffable disgust, and loathed its

presumptuous anchor buttons with all my soul. I then essayed, with tottering limbs and heavy head, to go to bed, but, unhappily, this was a feat, under the circumstances, more readily determined upon than executed; and but for that ubiquitous genius the Steward, I must inevitably have passed the night in company with a heap of locomotive sundries, which with perpetual motion rushed about the floor.

But sea-sickness is such a worn-out subject—a theme so harped upon by young sea-voyagers, and particularly by those facetious folk, who certainly never can have been at sea, or they would hesitate to cut their nasty jokes upon a subject so nauseating, that I abstain from a full and particular enumeration of all the horrible sufferings we endured during the ensuing period of twenty-one days of Channel navigation, at the end of which time we found ourselves again "off Deal." Human nature is undoubtedly a curious compound, and it is really wonderful what it can occasionally put up with. Such is proverbially the case at sea; but this sort of unsuccessful battling with the elements is positively disgusting. Here had we been "ploughing the ocean," "steming the briny main," and doing all that sort of nautical extravagance with which Tourists are so delightfully at home, and had not progressed on our voyage one inch. It is true that most of our difficulties and unpleasant sensations had yielded during this time to custom, and as use is second nature, and youthful appetite not to be neglected altogether, even at sea, we had not only acquired some little skill in the naval tactics necessary for the management of our berths and hammocks—which at one time had been perfect mockeries of beds, by reason of our utter

inability to get into them—but had even progressed so far in nautical life as to be able to eat, although our filthy beast of a cook, who literally never washed himself, unless he did it in the soup, or had had his dirty finger in the pie.

It still blew a severe gale when we returned to this abominable roadstead, and we found most of our late companions again at anchor there. During the night a brig just astern dragged her anchors, and was washed upon the Goodwin Sands, when every soul on board perished, which induced some serious reflections among ourselves, as we seemed to lay far too close to the north-east reef of these dangerous sands, over which the waves were momentarily dashing, throwing their foam and spray high in the air; and the wind obstinately persisted in blowing direct towards that dreaded quarter. During the whole of the day pilot-boats were busy picking up portions of the wreck, and four bodies were conveyed on shore. On the following morning another brig and a schooner dragged their anchors and drifted down the Gull stream, narrowly escaping the fatal sands.

The next day the wind veered a point further to the northward, and we made another start, accompanied by about four hundred vessels of all sorts and sizes, but with even less success than had attended our former attempt, for we got no further than Dungeness, where our pilot took his leave, finding it imperative that we should tack, which we did, and very nearly got grounded for our pains; for one of those fogs which sailors so abominate in the Channel, sprang up, and after plunging about for a considerable time under close-reefed topsails, with the wind blowing a hurricane, and the tide dead against us, it was found that

we were drifting stem foremost on to the French coast. Tried to tack, but "hung in stays," which nautical term, I was informed, implies, with vessels that sail, being in an awkward predicament, particularly on a lee shore, as in this instance; and it was not without a certain kind of satisfaction that we landsmen perceived, that these vaunting sons of Neptune were as frightened of the shore as we had been of the sea. They went through a variety of noisy evolutions, however, and succeeded in what they called "wearing" the ship; which manœuvre, as it was explained to me, had the effect of accomplishing their former attempt by a contrary method. I was not much the wiser for this information when I received it, and dare say my readers will be similarly enlightened; all I could perceive was, that the hazy ground, which all so much dreaded, had seemed to have shifted its position, and we were careering over the waves in an opposite direction at a delightful pace. But it was of no use striving against the Fates; we could not get on; so next afternoon we went back to the Downs, where again—"*Vento adverso detentus*"—we had to bide our time as best we might.

Our final attempt at starting was very peculiar. The wind suddenly became quite favourable; and away, with giant wings outspread to catch its long-sought aid, the goodly fleet of noble vessels hied. Not so ourselves; and worn-out patience testily demanded an explanation of this tantalizing delay; when to our supreme disgust we learned that the sailors had all "struck," and positively refused to weigh anchor. Remonstrances, promises, threats, were all expended in vain; they had had a sickener of the ship, and

wanted to leave her ; but as a new crew could not be got without much delay, this did not seem to answer our skipper's purpose. The Downs was now cleared of every vessel but ours, and the wind still blowing fresh and fair, we volunteered, in sheer desperation, to weigh anchor and help to work the ship ourselves, until we had starved the crew into submission. To this imprudent experiment the skipper gladly assented, and to work we went with a will, and by the help of mates, boatswain, and apprentice boys, were soon on our way, dashing the foaming billows gaily from our bows, and holding our course under easy sail.

But the evening came on raw and cold, and the wind freshening as the night advanced, we had to take in sail, which operation, as the sea rolled high and the storm waxed loud and fierce, was no easy matter for our inexperienced crew, and the consequence was, one sail was blown away, and the foretop-mast slightly " sprung," before we could sufficiently reduce the pressure of the canvass. A wretched night of toil ensued ; wet, cold, and apprehensive for the consequences of our rash attempt at amateur navigation, each danger became magnified by fear, in proportion as the unavoidable discomforts of our situation affected us. The captain now determined upon putting into Portsmouth—for the men still resolutely refused to work—and thitherward we steered ; but, strange to say, no Portsmouth met our view, long after it had been authoritatively pronounced that we ought to have been there ; and the wind having shifted a point or two during the night, we were unable to bear up closer. So, preferring to proceed to Plymouth, rather than to make a board backwards, we continued our

course down Channel, the wind still freshening, and the ship becoming more and more unmanageable in the hands of her feeble and disspirited crew.

Now the hero of all this disturbance and mutiny was a tall, raw-boned, rascally wretch of a seaman, called "Luff," of whom the remainder of the crew seemed to stand in most mysterious awe. He was a huge, surly savage, whose skill at fisty-cuffs completely kept in subjection any attempt among his comrades to resist his influence or authority. We plied this marine scoundrel hard with promises, and, at length, won from his obdurate heart an inclination towards compromise; and, under solemn contract to let them all go with their discharges, at Plymouth, they turned out to work the vessel into that port. But, alas! when morning came no land was in sight. The captain looked alarmed, and every one else looked puzzled. Mr. Luff swore savagely that he was humbugged. The thing was evidently incomprehensible, until suspicion giving rise to search, it was found that a parcel of iron nails had been carefully placed in each of the compass boxes, which had of course diverted us, no one knew how far, from our right direction. This mystery solved—although it was never ascertained who was the author of the villany—the ship was immediately "put about," and we bore up for the English coast; but it took us two days more before we even sighted the shore. Towards the night of the second day we saw a light, supposed under our doubtful circumstances to be the "Eddystone," off which we beat about, fearing at night to stand in too near the shore. At daybreak, however, it was discovered that we had grossly mistaken our position, the lighthouse prov-

ing to be the "Longships off Land's-End." In vain we tried to get back again either to Plymouth or Falmouth; the wind was blowing dead against us, and in this dilemma the skipper hailed a pilot cutter, which was sailing near, and agreed with the master for some trivial sum to take us into one of the ports of the Scilly Isles; but to this arrangement the men again demurred, and, as Mr. Luff remarked, "however foolish we are, we ar'n't quite such fools as to come for to go to the Scillies:" so, after much squabbling and mutual recrimination about grog, and work, and sundry matters of diet, it was agreed (there appearing to be no other alternative,) that bygones should be bygones, and that we should continue our voyage. So again, with a fair wind and somewhat brighter prospects, we resumed our course, not sorry to fall back upon our former position as passengers.

At last the white cliffs of England faded from our sight, and in spite of our earnest endeavours to get away from them during the past four weeks, a melancholy gloom diffused itself amongst us as they finally disappeared, leaving the wide world of waters alone around. For several days we now proceeded with fair winds, and all went smoothly as a marriage bell. We formed a very merry and not ill-assorted party; and with the charms of music, instrumental and vocal, we wiled away many a pleasant hour. Fishing, shooting, and gymnastics, alternately afforded sufficient diversity of employment during the day, while reading, writing, chess, or music, occupied the night.

We were constantly sighting other vessels bound to or from innumerable ports; some of which we approached

near enough to "speak." and a pleasant little excitement is that simple interchange of ordinary intelligence at sea; it speaks to the solitary wanderer of human hopes beyond the little storm-tossed home, which bounds his present career, and whispers cheery comfort even in the consciousness that he and his are not the only ones who, "cabined, cribbed, confined," are the unfortunate occupants of that which Dr. Johnson most appropriately calls "a prison, with a chance of being drowned."

In due course we passed Madeira and the Cape Verde Islands, one of the latter of which (St. Antonio.) we passed within sight—to us landsmen this was an interesting sight, as St. Antonio presents a particularly curious appearance, rising like a cloud, when viewed from a distance, two thousand feet above the level of the sea. We also saw the islands of Fogo and Brava, which are very small and insignificant-looking places. But I hasten on to the Equator, passing over the innumerable daily incidents which distinguish this species of locomotive imprisonment.

On the morning of the 2nd of December it was announced, that we were on the "Line." The vessel was becalmed in the most orthodox style, and lay

> "As idly as a painted ship
> Upon a painted ocean."

The heat and closeness of the atmosphere were intolerable, and it wanted but a continuance to let us realize the horrors of such calms as seem especially reserved for "Ancient Mariners" and Poets of the German school. However, in spite of the heat, Neptune, like an unaccountable Deity as he is, waited upon us with his accustomed *brus-*

querie. I am under the impression that there was a kind of allegory intended to be conveyed, as to the mode of that salt-water god's approach, and that a flaming tar-barrel was designed to be figurative in some way of his departure; but the real *bona fide* presence of a heap of disgusting-looking blackguards, rendered filthier than usual by an artificial application of tar and blood, and an elaborate display of dirty sheepskins, was all that an unimaginative spectator could perceive; and to this day I have ever been unable to discover why blood, sheepskins, or tar, should be so conspicuously displayed as illustrative of Neptune's choicest characteristics. An odour of East India rum, too, was distinctly perceptible when these savage representatives of the immortal son of Saturn and his darling Amphitrite approached; and Polyphemus (ably represented by our one-eyed sail-maker,) and the gentle Nereides, who lounged attendance on the royal beasts, had evidently tasted of the same vile tap, or else their breath belied them. However, the order of the day was more grog, and herein their inclinations were most unreasonably gratified; so that by the time the ceremony of shaving the uninitiated (a most filthy operation,) had been gone through, and everybody had been tripped up with ropes, knocked down with sundry flying missiles, or ducked in the canvas screens, which had been especially prepared for this laudable purpose, and there remained no possible pretence of a joke in keeping up this dangerous and indecent sort of insubordination any longer, they were what is figuratively called jolly, but literally beastly drunk, and the uproar which ensued, and which was kept up all day and night, is indescribable. This was the

auspicious recommencement of a series of irregularities which threatened the most serious consequences. The " honest Jack-tars," as Dibdin calls them, had found that a laxity of discipline prevailed, and, which was of still more importance, that a cargo of bottled ale was to be got at in the main hold ; they therefore discarded all appearance of subordination, and gave the reins to their apparently unbounded propensities to drink. From morning till night they were helplessly drunk, and again we had the mortification of having to work the vessel, with the added annoyance this time of all sorts of obstruction from the inebriated vagabonds who rolled about the decks, bent upon any kind of mischief which might turn up; until, pot valourous, they determined to essay a little piracy by way of a change; with which view they requested our almost demented skipper to resign his post in favour of Mr. Luff, who I have before mentioned as an element of discord on board this floating Elysium. A special demurrer was, however, entered to this proposition, which induced so serious an exhibition of hostilities, that it became imperative to arm for actual warfare, and hold ourselves in instant preparation for a fight.

I will not pause to pourtray any of the curious illustrations of character which this peculiar state of affairs produced ; suffice it to say, that even amidst the anxieties which every movement created, enough of the ridiculous was manifested to raise a hearty laugh at sundry of the visible misgivings of the spirit which afflicted some of our number ; nor will I prolong the narrative with high but well-deserved encomiums upon the admirable coolness and determination which characterised others ; for it would be vanity upon the

whole to claim anything like credit for overcoming men so thoroughly overcome with drink as were our despicable crew. They had armed themselves, however, with harpoons, handspikes, marlingspikes, and the like, but, happily, were not exactly competent to use such ugly weapons effectively; and as, in spite of their drunken courage, they still entertained a respectful reverence for fire-arms, we managed with considerable trouble, though without much danger, to capture them, one by one, until all were secured. Mr. Luff we had especial trouble with; he was highly cantankerous, and exceedingly desirous of distinguishing himself pugilistically with any person so inclined; and really never did mortal man appear so bitterly diappointed as was that naval nuisance, when he found himself bound and handcuffed, and could meet with nobody willing to cast him loose for the pleasure of gratifying his earnest desire for single combat. His entreaties on this head were most pathetic, and the promises of what he would do under such circumstances unlimited. He had fully designed, he informed us, to make us "luff up," to "boom-end us," to stow our gibs," "douse our colours," and had even had it in view to "heave the log with our hulls,"—and to perform, in fact, such a variety of other doubtful offices, that, in spite of his remonstrances, we deemed it prudent to continue him in durance vile, although he supported his entreaties by innumerable of those peculiar abjurations of any interest in his own blood, eyes, and limbs, which are so singularly expressive of the disinterestedness of sailor men's eccentricities.

Here a murder of the deepest dye, perpetrated in the most barbarous and mysterious manner, at the dead hour

of night, attended with the most horrible circumstances and fraught with the direst consequences to the safety of the ship, would I have no doubt be interesting; but as I am not inventing materials for excitement, I am compelled to forego such gentle stimulants, and carry on my "log" with small incidents which occur to memory rather than imagination. Fact being the foundation of my tale, truth, sober, honest truth, is the respectable apology which I am ever ready to plead in mitigation of occasional dullness. But, indeed, our perils of the deep were not a few; and the hair-breadth escapes to which the junior married man of our party was incessantly subjected, were, to his mind at least, surprising. On deck he was beset with dangers of every kind; each wave that struck the ship bore in its hidden mysteries an especial purpose of washing him overboard; each moving spar or rope displaced, or sudden lurch, were evil omens to his timorous mind; and a dire and dismal time he seemed to spend in the secluded precincts of his miserable cabin. But, strange depravity of human nature, these manifold mental sufferings formed sources of the highest mirth to the unsympathetic souls by whom he was surrounded, and who, with an instinct truly animal, no sooner saw him sink beneath one load of withering cares than they rushed joyously on, heaping upon his fallen head such shovelfuls of other ills, that I sometimes marvel now how he ever survived them.

After mature deliberation it was decided, that we should run for the port of Rio Janeiro, thinking it better to pursue that course than to attempt to push on for the more distant harbour of the Cape of Good Hope; and it blew such a

sweet little seven-knot breeze when we undertook this task, that really after all our antipathies to amateur sailing, there did not appear much hardship in working a passage there. But the rainy season came on, and very soon effected a change in our opinions on this score—and oh, the weary watches we passed ; cold, wet, dispirited ; I shall never forget them, and but for an incident which roused us from our despondent weariness, and shewed us our imminent peril, I really think we should all have given up the job, cast the men adrift, and let them do as they liked with the ship. On the seventh or eighth morning, just as the blood-red sun rose with the peculiar suddenness which is so apparent in the Tropics, scattering from the horizon the hazy clouds of night, and diffusing instantaneous light and heat around, we were startled to perceive a long, low, black, rakish-rigged schooner, close on our starboard bow; which vessel our young married friend instinctively pronounced to be a Pirate; it was the very thing he had long expected, and he cast himself down under the lee of the cabin skylight overpowered by so dreadful a realization of his worst anticipations. I am inclined to think that most of us had also sundry misgivings of the same nature, for an enumeration of all the harassing cruelties which Pirates invariably inflict upon young married folk, was in this instance but feebly insisted on ; and he was allowed to retire to his disconsolate better half, with only a vague insinuation respecting their habits of baiting shark-hooks with very young children, and of stringing up refractory husbands to the fore-yard arm.

Before we had time to make up our minds what could

possibly be the character of our suspicious-looking neighbour, she steered round, threw open her ports, and shewed us such a row of teeth, (as the captain was pleased to call the guns,) as left us but little doubt as to her calling and intentions. For my own part I confess, that at no part of the voyage had I experienced sensations anything like so uncomfortable; I felt satisfied that my end was approaching, and although by no means particular in some respects, I candidly admit, that if permitted a choice, I should select a dryer grave than the Atlantic, and less unceremonious administrators of my final effects than a murderous band of Buccaneers; but it seemed fated otherwise: yet the Pirate craft was behaving very curiously; she no sooner approached within range of her guns, than sheering off, she lay to, just astern of us, evidently, as we conjectured, to complete her preparations. We carefully scanned her from stem to stern with our glasses, but except one solitary individual, who was submitting us with his glass to a similar elaborate scrutiny, no living thing was visible.

"What's to be done?" was now the general enquiry; it was evident that no reliance could be placed upon our crew, who would only have been too happy to turn Rovers; besides, the warlike evidences of the schooner's guns rendered the idea of resistance under any circumstances ridiculous; and as for running away, we might as well have thought of flying in the air. The question, therefore, of what was to be done, was easier asked than answered; but still the wonder was, "Why does she not attack us?" It was very mysterious and very unpleasant.

At length, the doctor, who had latterly been very assi-

duous to the brandy bottle, ventured upon a surmise to the effect that after all she might not be a Pirate. Then what could she be? What was she doing there in that suspicious guise? Obviously the only way of ascertaining this was to go and see; so after a vast deal of argument it was decided that, to bring things to a crisis, we should bear up towards her, lower our gig, and pull on board. But with a vessel well on our weather-gage, which could sail two knots to our one, this also was sooner said than done; for as fast as we changed our course she did the same, and afternoon arrived without our gaining one point. We then hoisted signals of distress, which brought matters somewhat nearer to a conclusion, for she vouchsafed to let us near her so as to be able to pull on board, where we found ourselves in the midst of about two hundred of the most cut-throat-looking vagabonds I ever beheld. Luckily, however, they were not Pirates, or our trip had not been quite so satisfactory. The vessel proved to be a Brazilian Slaver, not laden with slaves, but returning from St. Helena with a batch of expiree convicts, formerly engaged in the Slave Trade, and who, luckily for us, were unarmed, for their feelings towards our nation was anything but favourable, and a more likely-looking set of men for trying their luck at Piracy I never saw. It appeared, too, from the confession of the Captain, (a fat, jolly old Englishman,) that he had mistaken us for dangerous characters of some sort, from the singular appearance of our motley crew; and this was not much to be wondered at, considering that all the arms of the ship were arranged on the poop, for the purposes of internal protection, and that his first inspection revealed us

to his wondering eyes walking about with drawn swords and pistols in our belts, a formidable-looking lot in the distance. Having explained our circumstances to him he kindly lent us assistance, and kept us company safe into the harbour of Rio Janeiro, where on our arrival we were most unceremoniously received by a cannon-ball from the port authorities, who evidently, like our companion the skipper, did not know at first what to make of us.

The entrance to Rio harbour is singularly beautiful; and indeed, the whole line of coast between Cape Frio and the port is well worthy of admiration. There are several islands outlying the harbour, which, whilst they add materially to the varied charms of the scene, are, nevertheless, somewhat in the way in light and baffling winds; but when fairly entering the port, the wild grandeur of the surrounding mountain scenery, and the formidable appearance of the fortified points, or promontories, which meet the eye at every turn, give a peculiarity to the *tout ensemble* which is very striking. The city of San Sebastian is delightfully situated on the southern side of a deep indentation of the principal bay, and is well sheltered from the prevailing winds. We found a numerous fleet of vessels of all nations, including thirteen men-of-war, riding in the harbour, and the whole place seemed alive with busy men. Everything however, was so entirely strange, so foreign, that we, untravelled mortals, experienced considerable difficulty in reconciling ourselves to them; but as these Sketches purport to be Australian, I will not pause to describe even the beauties or novelties of Rio, nor tell of our adventures there, albeit they were numerous, and at the time, to us,

highly interesting. I merely mention, therefore, that we remained there six weeks, seeing all that could be seen in the time, both of the Town and adjacent country; when, having disposed of our refractory crew, (who, on account of some legal technicality, were, I regret to say, most inadequately punished,) and obtained a fresh batch,—gems from all nations—we resumed our voyage.

The run to the Cape of Good Hope was effected with speed and comfort; scarcely an event occurring to break the quiet monotony which is so distinguishing a peculiarity of a long sea-voyage, except a little quiet scandal, which, for want of better employment, engaged considerable attention, particularly among our lady passengers, the object having reference to the supposed illicit loves of the Steward and a thick-lipped nymph, whose more legitimate business it had been the looking after a baby belonging to the before-mentioned juvenile Benedict, for which duty she had been especially engaged.

After rounding the Cape, however, we encountered more boisterous weather, and a heavy squall or two in the neighbourhood of the Islands of St. Paul and Amsterdam, knocked us about a good deal, refreshing our memories of the unpropitious weather in the Channel. A continued succession of variable winds ensued until after we had rounded Van Diemen's Land, whence with light but still baffling breezes, we quietly proceeded to Sydney, the heads of the noble harbour leading to which we safely entered on the 17th of March, "St. Patrick's-day in the morning," after a voyage of between five and six months' duration.

It is with curious feelings that one first sees land after

the long estrangement of a voyage. It was with peculiar delight that we looked upon a foreign shore, and trod the streets of an enormous city, crowded with strange and novel sights, though thronged with strangers to our creed and country; but it was with infinitely more curious gratification that we gazed upon the picturesque beauties which graced this lovely harbour's banks, and hailed—high towering above all the charming sights that greet the pilgrim of the waters in this haven of rest—the well-remembered spire of a church so like, so absolutely the same old-fashioned English steeple we had left behind in the secluded village near our place of birth, that in a moment every feeling of our hearts flew back to that dear spot, and time and distance were annihilated.

No. 3. AUSTRALIA.

Of Australia, as a Continent, or grand division of the globe, but a very small portion is as yet known; and it might be uninteresting to pursue in detail a description of even such parts as have been already penetrated and examined. Australia is well understood to be a vast island, by far the largest in the known world, nearly equal in extent to the continent of Europe: it lies between 9 and 38 deg. of south latitude, and 112 and 153 deg. of east longitude, and contains a mass of land nearly two thousand miles square. In so large an area of country it will, perhaps, be sufficient to remark, that the usual diversity of scenery, as well as every variety of climate, from temperate to torrid, is of course to be met with.

But there are no conspicuously grand nor striking peculiarities to be recorded of its yet discovered territories; and, apart from the advantages which science gains from every new investigation, they are most uninteresting. Its mountains are relatively small and few in number, the highest (the Southern Alps,) are insignificant by comparison with their stupendous European namesakes. Its rivers are neither numerous nor extensive; the largest, the Murray, is but 420 miles in length to its junction with the Barwin, which, again, is barely 800 miles to its extreme northern source. Its additions to the animal and vegetable products for the service of mankind, have been few and unimportant. Its soil in general is sandy, dry, and, except in comparatively small and isolated patches, far from fertile; but its highly-favoured geographical position, the centre of two wealth-bound oceans,

and in the midst of innumerable rich, and fertile islands; the boundless extent of its pastoral lands; the vast capabilities of its primœval forests for ship-building purposes, rivalling even North America itself; the great natural facilities it affords for depôts for the Seal and Whale Fisheries of the Southern Ocean; the surpassing beauty of its climate, and the amazing value, quantity, and diversity of its mineral productions, ensure for it a most important position among the future Empires of these Southern Seas. The adjacent shores and islands of the Indian Ocean have long been the wealth-inviting marts for European commerce and enterprise; the time may come, and shortly too, when even Indian opulence shall yield, whilst it administers, to Australian influence and importance. Already it ranks high in commercial consequence; already do its illimitable pastures furnish food, clothing, and occupation to millions of human beings; and already is the attention of the civilized world attracted to its shores by the vast and inexhaustible mineral productions with which they teem. Over thousands of square miles has the most precious of metals, gold, been discovered; whilst coal, iron, and copper, which are, perhaps, as valuable and certainly more useful minerals, exist in many of its districts in bountiful profusion. Its means of future greatness exist not only, therefore, as is sometimes supposed, in its highly-favoured position, but equally in its vast and self-contained resources.

Australia is now divided into several Colonies, namely, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia, or Swan River. Another division is contemplated to the northward, of which the port of Moreton Bay will form

the centre and seat of government. Of these divisions the first-named colony is the oldest, the largest, the most important, and most thickly inhabited. Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth, are the principally populated towns, the respective centres of the commerce of the great territorial divisions above mentioned, of which Sydney is at present by ar the most considerable, being a very extensive, well-built, and populous city, uniting in its position great advantages both as a sea-port and central point of inland communication. Its harbonr, (Port Jackson,) is admitted on all hands to be one of the finest and most commodious in the world; second only, perhaps, to that of Rio Janeiro.

The indigenous productions of the comparatively limited belt of land which has yet been settled, are numerous; and although but few of them have added much to the wealth of the world, or to the amelioration of the human race, they are in themselves far from unimportant.

I have mentioned that gold exists in great abundance over a large area of its southern and south-western interior. This highly-interesting subject is reviewed in full in the concluding article of this series of Sketches. Coal is unlimited along the coast of New South Wales; iron and copper are abundant also, and those invaluable minerals are again found in plenty along the south-western coast of this vast island. The Burra-Burra Copper Mines of South Australia may perhaps be regarded as unequalled in extent and richness.

Of the Forest products of the interior, the Eucalyptus (or Gum,) is the most important and numerous; many of its varieties are particularly well adapted for house and ship-

building purposes. Ironbark, Stringy-bark, Black-butt, Blue and Flooded Gums, are among its most useful varieties. The Peppermint tree (of the same species,) yields from its leaves a large supply, each spring, of the most delicious manna, which, in addition to its fine flavour, is highly esteemed for medicinal uses.

The Acacias are a numerous and beautiful collection of trees, among which the most frequently met with are the Mimosas and the several species of Wattle, which are much valued for their ornamental appearance; their astringent bark is often used medicinally, and is also to a great extent employed for tanning purposes.

Very large, beautiful, and valuable cedar, for joiners' and cabinet manufacturers' use, grows in considerable abundance on the banks of most of the rivers, creeks, and gullies in the neighbourhood of the coast, and a useful species of Pine-tree also flourishes in many of these localities.

The Cabbage-tree, or Corypha-Palm, is a stately and beautiful tree, producing immense leaves, the centre of which is used very extensively in the manufacture of the peculiar hats which are worn so commonly in the Bush of this country.

The Beech, Mangrove, Moreton-bay Fig-tree, and Chesnut; the Bunya-Bunya, Sassafrass, and Cypress, two or three varieties of Casuarina, or River Oak; the Waratah, or native Tulip; the Banksia, the Currajong, the Grass-tree, &c., are also among the productions of its trackless forests, many of which are fine handsome trees; the Moreton-bay, Fig, and Chesnut, and the Bunya-Bunya, eminently so: the latter being, beyond comparison, the most

important vegetable production of the country, furnishing as it does so large a supply of food to the Aboriginal inhabitants of the northern interior. The districts in which it chiefly flourishes are specially reserved by the Government for the exclusive use of the natives. A species of Sandal-wood, which gives out in burning a fragrant perfume, grows plentifully on the Dawson River. Myall, Brigalow, Blood-wood, Stunted Iron-bark, and an innumerable variety of Vines, are the principal components of the northern scrubs. The former of these, the Myall, *(Acacia pendula,)* is a most pleasing and graceful tree; its leaves by daylight are of a pale greyish green colour, but the effect of moonlight upon them is surpassingly beautiful; each trembling, pendulous leaf reflects a softened, silvery light, through which their graceful and delicate sprays are faintly visible, like pencilled and transparent tracings. In a gentle breeze of wind the brilliant effect of these apparently moonlit corruscations is of course considerably heightened. This fairy-like shrub has, as might have been expected, from its sweet association, called into existence many a latent spark of poetry, and been the theme of many of its most beautiful images.

In addition to the ordinary fruits of England, which grow profusely, the Vine, the Fig, the Date, the Pomegranate, the Guava, the Banana, the Orange, the Lemon, the Lime, the Mulberry, and a variety of other such produce, are peculiarly adapted to this country, and are freely and generally cultivated; in fact, every fruit common to either a temperate or inter-tropical climate may be successfully produced. The Pine-apple, in the northern districts, grows as freely as the cabbage in England, and the Cotton and the

Tobacco Plant flourish luxuriantly; and it is the want of adequate labour only which prohibits at present the extensive cultivation of such valuable products as Tea, Sugar, Rice, Coffee, Opium, Ginger, Pepper, or Spices, and the addition to the staple exports of the country of Silk, Flax, Indigo, &c. A considerable manufacture of light wines is now carried on in the middle districts of New South Wales, the choicest varieties of Vines having been imported for this purpose; and from the peculiar adaptation of the soil and climate for this delightful culture, a very considerable and lucrative trade in wine will no doubt soon be established. Brandy of the finest description is distilled from the colonial peach.

Maize, Wheat, Oats, Barley, Pulse, and every description of English grain and vegetable, flourishes well; but the indigenous edible fruits, with the exception of the Bunya-Bunya, are very unimportant. The native Currant and Raspberry, the native Plum, Tamarind, Chesnut, Geebungs, Five-Corners, Lillypillies, Snodgollions, &c., are, however, well-recognized delicacies among the rising Anglo-Australian generation.

None of the common or useful animals, nor any capable of supplying their place, are indigenous to any portion of the yet discovered country, but all thrive well, and multiply prodigiously when once imported, as the large and annually increasing exports of wool and tallow, the produce of imported sheep and cattle, abundantly testify. Australia, also, appears to be free from wild and dangerous animals—the native Dog, which is numerous and destructive, and the Buffalo,

discovered to the northward—being, perhaps, the only exceptions; and even the latter is reported to be not very dangerous, but timid and retreating. Alligators, however, are said to be found in the extreme northern waters, and these, it may be presumed, are not generally accounted agreeable neighbours.

The Kangaroo, and the inferior orders of the very singular and inoffensive Marsupial family, are still numerous.

Immense varieties of Birds people the forests, some of which are of gigantic size, and some much smaller than the English wren; with few exceptions they are extremely beautiful, but destitute of song. The brilliant plumage of the innumerable Pigeons, Parrots, Parroquets, Pheasants, Cockatoos, and Macaws, is, perhaps, the most conspicuous. The Mœnura Superba, or Lyre-bird, is a singularly-elegant creature; the Eagle-Hawk, Sparrow-Hawk, Bustard, Emu, Plover, Curlew, Duck, Pelican, Swan, Goose, Heron, Crane, Rail, Snipe, Quail, &c., furnish abundant occupation for the sportsman; from whose attentions a very curious bird, called the Laughing Jackass, from the striking resemblance of its note to a boisterous human laugh, is usually exempt, by reason partly of the original comicality of its appearance, and partly from the valuable assistance it affords to the Settler in the destruction of snakes and other vermin. The *Ardea Antigone*, or Native Companion, (a very beautiful and graceful bird,) is also rarely destroyed; and the large flocks of Ibises, too, *(Ibis Spinicollis,)* which periodically visit the settled districts, are mostly held sacred to the good cause of insect destruction, in which pursuit they are most effective labourers. The *Ornithorhyneus paradoxus*, or

Platypus, has often been described—the doubt with which it was first regarded by Naturalists of eminence having obtained for it an established notoriety. This curious creature, which is half duck, half seal or otter, and the *Echidna*, or Spring Ant-eater, are peculiar to Australia; the former inhabits and burrows into the banks of rivers, creeks, and water-holes, living apparently very like the duck, and sustaining itself mainly, if not entirely, upon river insects and aquatic plants; the latter, which is rarely met with, is something of the hedgehog species, with the distinguishing characteristic of a long projecting nose or bill: it burrows in the ground, and lives upon ants and such like insects, which it readily catches by means of the long extensile tongue with which it is provided. The Wambat, or Native Bear, (a creature of the Sloth kind,) and the Flying Fox, (an enormous sort of Bat,) may also be included among Australia's singular productions.

The Flora of Australia is exceedingly interesting; but, like its animal and vegetable productions, exhibits nothing contributing materially to the use or benefit of mankind. The *Calambac* is a fragrant herb, and there are also several species of Jasmine, which emit a delicious odour; but the greater proportion of the wild flowers, which enliven the open forest ridges and plains, are entirely destitute of perfume. Some portions of the interior are singularly scant of flowers.

Sea Turtle and an abundant supply of Fish, swarm along the coast. Cod, Mullet, Snapper, Herring, Whiting, Flathead, Bream, Crayfish, Lobsters, Garrfish, Eels, Oysters, Shrimps, &c., inhabit the bays and inland rivers. The several beaches of the bays and harbours of the coast are

strewed each tide with new, extraordinary, and elegant shells. Insects of varied beauty, and reptiles of nearly every grade, are also numerous. Native Bees abound in many parts of the interior, and their fragrant honey forms an important addition to the food of the Natives. The Locust, also, is very prolific; the ravages of this insect upon the herbage and green crops is a serious inconvenience to the Settler; the black fellows, however, indulge themselves by feeding prodigiously upon them. The Lizard tribe, too, is exceedingly numerous and of great beauty. The Iguanas are not here, I think, amphibious, as I have seldom seen them except at great distances from water, frequently when none was to be obtained for miles around, and never in it. Different kinds of Ants, black, white, and red, lend their important agency towards the torment of the dwellers in the Bush; they also play their part effectively as scavengers. The Warrior-Ants, soldier or sailor, according to colour, are bold and formidable insects; they are sometimes very large, between two and three inches in length, and do not seem afraid of attacking anything, no matter what its size; their bite is very severe and sometimes dangerous. Snakes, Deaf Adders, Tarantulas, Centipedes, Mosquitoes, Flies, and Fleas, of everydenomination, thrive here amazingly, and the suctorial habits of the latter would appear, from great concurrent testimony, to be extraordinarily well developed.

Such very erroneous notions seem to prevail in England respecting this Antipodean country, in spite of the growing and now frequent communication which exists, that to attempt either to expose every error, or to exhibit every true particular concerning it, would involve a much too ela-

borate and probably tedious review of details for the purpose of the present volume. A few of such particulars, however, will be found scattered through subsequent pages of these Sketches, introduced as occasion may require for the purposes of illustration. A word or two respecting Sydney, the principal city of Australia, will complete this introductory article.

One of the first impressions conveyed to the mind of a new arrival concerning Sydney, is unbonnded astonishment at its unexpected magnitude, and the Old-English-like aspect of its houses, streets, and shops—an astonishment which is often most ludicrously exhibited. It seems in vain that statistics have been published, and comparative tables of population compiled, the untravelled mind appears incapable of divesting scenes and places that are old of consequent importance and extent, or of realizing the facts which tabular statements exhibit; hence it is not uncommon to observe how startled the generality of immigrants appear at finding that Sydney is considerably more extensive and populous than the particular county or sea-port town which they have left behind them in dear Old England. Their place is still so very young that they are altogether unprepared for such gigantic growth; and as to its being so like an English town seemed to strike them as positively absurd, that after having travelled sixteen thousand miles, to all appearance as much at home as if they had never left their own firesides, when by a trumpery journey of a few hundred miles in length they might have been in the midst of everything as charmingly foreign as the most fastidious admirer of change could desire. It is true that a greater

inequality of buildings may upon closer inspection be visible, in Sydney than in most English towns; low, ill-constructed huts and stately mansions standing side by side, the former of which, from the necessary alterations from time to time having been made in the levels of the several streets may sometimes be seen perched upon an isolated block of rock, twenty or thirty feet above your head, or down in some damp-looking, dirty hole, with its chimney top about the level of your feet; but these are exceptions which are rapidly disappearing before the giant strides of improvement, and the city upon the whole is a monument of wonderful growth and advancement. It is delightfully situated at the extremity of a deeply-indented tongue of land, whose several minor promontories, jutting out into the deep ornamental waters of the cove, afford at once the most commodious sites for wharves and warehouses, and for the costly and luxurious habitations of the wealthier portion of the community. In the immediate neighbourhood of Sydney, numerous elegant villas contribute materially to the beauty of the scenery which surrounds the harbour.

The first impressions of astonishment with which Sydney is regarded soon of course wear off, and naturally give place to others touching its climate and inhabitants; the former of which, although most salubrious, is generally esteemed too hot, the latter somewhat too American: but neither of these peculiarities are exhibited to such a disagreeable excess as to prevent a very ready adaptation of both mind and body to the circumstances with which the new arrival is surrounded; and it generally happens, that while his body is acclimatizing, that equally easy inoculation, termed "*Colo-*

nial Experience," is diffusing its important influence through the feelings of his mind.

The succeeding descriptive Sketches, incidental to my own experiences and observations, are intended more fully to exhibit many subjects of interest to which I have yet but briefly alluded; and more particularly with respect to the Aboriginal inhabitants of this vast island: a subject, to which, from its interest and importance, I have devoted considerable time and attention.

No. 4—"CAMPING OUT."

After many years of constant wandering through the vast and varied regions of the lonely "Bush," it is strange yet pleasing to recall, by memory's faithful aid, the startling changes time has wrought upon the habits, thoughts, and feelings of one's earlier life. The genius of civilization, with its restless influence, has transformed, perhaps, the trackless deserts which your enterprise first penetrated and subdued; and scenes of rural beauty, teeming with evidence of human industry and skill, have suddenly usurped the fruitful places of the silent vale; but still the memory of the past, as it lives time hallowed in the human heart, surpasses all the magic wonderment which social change can possibly create; and in our vivid contrasts of the present with the past, the fullness of these mental changes must, by every one who meditates at all upon such subjects, be deeply felt, or we have wandered in this beauteous world as through a wilderness of flowers, and passed the rose unseen.

To me it has ever been one of the greatest delights of memory to recall these earlier impressions, no matter in what form, and to mark therein this strange inscrutable mutation; to conjure up amidst accustomed scenes the freshness of the mind's initiation; to note Time's marvellous influence on such fleeting things, and especially in its insidious might, as it steals upon the mental eye, whose tutored gaze unconsciously adapts its growing power to the vast and ever-varying attributes of human progress. Huts, stations, villages, now stand where but a few short years ago,

alone I traced the hitherto unbroken solitudes of the wilderness. I see the means that mark this wondrous change in every cultivated feature of the country, but I *feel* more keenly the transformation which these means have wrought in the altered sensations of my own peculiar habits and perceptions, and thus it is I love to view the smallest incident of bygone days, not so much as to the facts themselves, but as to my experience of their influence upon the feelings of my mind.

The very simple and ordinary circumstance of "Camping out,"—of course as necessary a portion of a Bush campaign as the eating and drinking of daily life—affords an example how visibly this change can be effected without the aid of external differences. I remember, as if it were but yesterday, every particular of my first experience of this "*sub jovem*" style of existence, and delight to picture to myself and feel again its curious contrast with the present.

It was between the heads of the Barnard and Little Manning Rivers, among the rough and broken ranges of that almost impassable tract of country, that I took this portion of my first lesson in the mysteries of "BUSHING IT." We had not exactly lost our way, but owing to the extreme roughness of the mountains over which we had been journeying, we were somewhat out of reckoning as to distance, when the shades of evening warned us of the necessity of securing an eligible spot for our night's encampment. My companions, the one an experienced hand in such matters, whom long practice had rendered capable of great endurance, the other one of those anomalous extravagances of nature and art, of whom no two people are agreed, and concerning

whose character such vague and nonsensical notions generally prevail—a semi-civilized savage of our Australian Bush. These at once set about active preparations for the night. The horses were speedily "hobbled," the baggage stowed away, the fire lighted, water pots filled and put on, and a sufficient supply of dry wood gathered together for the night's consumption, when the promptings of a somewhat pampered appetite, rendered much keener than usual by a hard day's ride, suggested to me the immediate propriety of enquiries as to the needful food; for I had left everything of course (like most new chums,) to the absolute arrangement of my hardy friend.

"Food," said he, "what food do you expect? we have got nothing with us but tea and tobacco."

"No food!" I replied, gasping with painful amazement at the coolness of this serious announcement; good gracious, what will become of me, I thought, as vivid reminiscences of the touching catastrophe of the "Babes in the Wood" occurred to my imagination; "and Combo, too?" enquired I, anxious to call out some latent spark of sympathy for the "*poor Blackfellow*," (as the Exeter Hall Philanthropists delight to style him,) "What will he do?"

"Oh! never fear for him; he'll cut out an opossum most likely for himself, or get a few grubs; and if you are hungry, I dare say he'll find something for you. But do as I do, take a pipe or a quid, and you won't feel hungry then."

I readily conceived that if I did take a pipe and a quid, I should not, in spite of my appetite, be much inclined for eating; for in those days the "*grateful weed*" was a stranger to my taste, at least in the masticating branch of its

consumption, and at that particular moment I thought I should prefer trying a little of the black fellow's marsupial fare even to a pipe, untempting as the former might appear; I therefore followed in the direction of his steps, to urge the necessity of providing materials for a double repast, and also to view the extraordinary mode in which these ingenious fellows contrive to extract that nimble little animal (the opossum,) from its apparently safe and hidden retreats.

I was struck at once with Combo's keenness of perception; the smallest scratch upon the gum-tree's bark, invisible almost to my unpractised eyes, revealed to him, with an exactness nearly incredible, the whole history of that identical tree—with reference, of course, to its edible inhabitants—and, what was more immediately to the purpose in hand, whether the said inhabitants were then at home or abroad. I now saw at a glance how little hope of safety these furry gentry could gather from concealment; and the moment the wary fellow had finally made selection, and began his wonderful ascent of the huge perpendicular trunk of the tree, —winding his elastic body round and round its smooth and branchless surface, notching out step by step as he ascended, at intervals of two or three feet, slight chips of bark with his rude tomahawk, to give himself the merest toe-hold—I perceived how little security they might reasonably calculate upon from their apparently unapproachable heights. When he reached the boughs, the lowest of which was about fifty feet from the ground, he glided along them like a snake, listening attentively, and carefully tapping with the back of his tomahawk the hollow branches into which the affrighted

animal had seemed to fly for refuge; deliberately following up one of these, until he felt and heard that the opossum could by possibility mount no higher, he cut deep into the hollow wood, a foot or so below the well-traced spot, and in a moment more thrust in his arm, seized the trembling victim by his furry hide, dragged him through the aperture, and despatched him by a blow on the head. He then cut another at my request from an adjoining bough, and descended by the curiously-primitive ladder of notches which he had constructed during his ascent.

We returned to the camp, and immediately initiated our preparations for supper by throwing the "game" upon the burning embers to singe and roast; this, I was informed, was the orthodox way of cooking these indigenous dainties; but oh, the horrible stench that it created! I shall never forget it; my furious appetite already began considerably to abate, and by the time I had singed, cleansed, cooked, and disposed of the first mouthful, it was quite gone. It struck me that I had never tasted anything half so filthy in the whole course of my existence. I can describe its peculiarly atrocious effect upon my palate in no better terms than that its taste reminded me strongly of the smell of a "Black Gin," a horrible stench compounded of grease, dirt, and gum leaves, which requires to be felt to be duly appreciated. The odour was bad enough, but the fact of eating a substantial *facsimile* of that *epitome* of beastliness was filthily disgusting. Yet I have subsequently lived upon these animals for months together, and almost brought myself to think I liked them; so far use is second nature, and hunger often unappeased the very best of sauce.

This night, however, I turned into my blankets supperless, and was in consequence proportionably hungry and sulky. By this time the evening was far advanced, and the strange mysterious indications of night became each moment more and more distinct, the hum of insect life was changed, the palpable hush of every breathing sound that marks the few brief moments of departing day was gone, and again the buzz of life stole whispering on my listening ear, breaking the deathlike spell that seemed to bind the living myriads of this wilderness of trees in the lonely but lovely moments of its twilight shade. One by one these re-awakened sounds of life broke audibly the lull profound: each tree produced its vocal choir: the nimble opossum and fantastic squirrel darted from bough to bough: wild hideous sounds of some strange bird of night, screaming with frightful violence, at times awoke the echoes of the surrounding hills: a few mosquitoes, too, hummed in spiteful proximity to my upturned face; while from the neighbouring creek and distant river the incessant choral croaking of innumerable frogs, occasionally swelling into an almost deafening tumult, filled up each momentary void with their discordant notes, and utterly forbade on my part, any hope of sleep. Besides all this, the very strangeness of of the scene kept every nerve upon the stretch, and filled with undefined but tangible occupation each faculty of my excited and bewildered brain; one moment I could fancy, in the immediate darkness of the adjacent Bush, strange lights were flitting through its leafy maze, then threatening eyes would seem to glare upon me from its viewless depths;—suddenly a horrible, hissing sound would break upon my ear, as if a legion of snakes

were hovering near, in momentary preparation for attack; —mingling with these, the curlew's wail,—the night-hawk's piercing shriek,—the wild dog's mournful howl,—and the "Laughing Jackass," with his shockingly human *ha ha-ha ha!* in turns broke in upon the swelling chorus of the noises of the night, making its darkness hideous. In restless, miserable suspense, I lay listening to all these startling sounds; at one time springing madly up from the touch of some harmless rabbit-rat, which played about the camp in search of food; at another, shrinking in vague horror from the invisible approach of some yet more subtle danger, breathed in the murmured rustling of each neighbouring tree or shrub.

My companions, however, were soon fast asleep; as for me, I candidly confess I never passed a more painfully-anxious and uncomfortable night in my life. My hip bones and elbows were speedily rubbed raw, and before an hour had passed I ached in every bone in my body with the unyielding hardness of the ground, and the rapidly increasing coldness of the night. The abominable wood fire too kept either going nearly out, or blazing away enough to roast an ox; and no sooner had I coiled myself up into some new and temporarily easier position, than something wanted doing to it evidently beyond my skill in such affairs: yet there these two partners of my toil lay, in happy unconsciousness of the misery I was suffering—snoring away as soundly as if they had been in featherbeds. I looked upon them both with anything but kindly spirit each time the accursed fire, which was always smoking me to suffocation, scorching my head, or letting my back freeze, compelled

me to get up to check or renovate its obstinate extremes; as for the "poor black," I felt I could have brained him on the spot with an approving conscience for his undisturbable somnolence, and did even go so far, on one of these trying occasions, as to gather together a small heap of logs, sticks, and stones, of suitable dimensions for throwing. But it was all of no use; whenever a missile hit him on some tender spot he only turned heavily round, twisted his drowsy head more tightly under his arm, arranged his legs a degree more comfortably, and then snored the louder for the temporary disturbance of his deep and obstinate repose.

Yet this, too, is just how I myself have slept hundreds of times since, and almost wondered how people could lie awake under circumstances so favourable to the influence of the drowsy god; for there are, of course, disturbing causes (not such trifling or imaginary ones as those I have just endeavoured to describe,) under which the most seasoned Bushman fails to obtain the necessary rest he seeks—such, for instance, as a flood of rain, without fire, when the soft earth, yielding to the impression of the slightest weight, half buries him as he lays down in a bed of slimy mud and water; or when those nightly pests, musquitoes, freely swarm, which in the warmer latitudes, and especially near the coast, or to low or swampy country, they do to a most frightful extent; and where getting into a bag and half smothering himself by smoking, *ad infinitum*, is the Bushman's only temporary relief from the bloodthirsty attacks of these tormenting insects. People who have only suffered from their envenomed bites in towns can form no possible conception of their occasional number and viru-

lence in the Bush; I have seen the atmosphere darkened with them as by a dense impenetrable fog: entirely shutting up the view, and opposing their innumerable ranks as palpable barriers against your further progress; and when it is considered that each of this legion of devils is capable of extracting blood through the hide of a bullock, no greater torment can well be imagined. These are, indeed, sore trials for a hard-worked man, but in the case to which I have just been alluding I needed no such real hardship to prohibit sleep; the simple facts of strange sounds, a hard earth bed, a saddle for my pillow, a refractory fire, and something considerably worse than no supper, were all-in-all sufficient for that purpose.

So utterly worn out did I at last become with these repeated and unsuccessful attempts to lay at ease, that about ten o'clock I fairly gave it up, determining to pass the remainder of the night either sitting, standing, or strolling about in the surrounding Bush. An hour had scarcely passed, however, in this dreary monotony, when I perceived a curious and very remarkable change in the appearance of the heavens, which I at first mistook for lightning; I almost hoped, indeed, for a storm, that it might disturb my unconscious sleeping partners and awaken them, in more senses than one, to the amount of misery I was then enduring. Subsequently I could almost have been positive it was the dawn of day that I saw, but that I had indisputable evidence that it was scarcely twelve o'clock. Gradually, however, it assumed a more distinctive character, my doubts were resolved, and I recognised it as an AURORA AUSTRALIS, one of the most singular and beautiful pheno-

mena I ever beheld, and amply compensating for the want of ease by which I was enabled to view it. I remember to have seen but one exhibition of the Aurora Borealis, and to have been anything but astonished at its brilliancy; yet this may probably have been occasioned either by my distance from its principal northern seat, by my too large expectancies, or from its having been really but a slight and unimportant exhibition of that much-admired phenomenon. Here I have had many opportunities of witnessing the Southern Aurora, and singularly enough, each time apparently with clearer views, and certainly with much increased delight. There is a good deal, too, by the way, as Basil Hall says, in knowing how to look at an object, the precise nature of the thing you look for; and the facility with which I have perceived, at each successive Aurora, some new or previously unobserved feature in this beautiful phenomenon is, I confidently regard, an evidence of that physical training which I take it Hall wishes to signify by "knowing how to look at an object;" and it is certainly an example of that general change I have been endeavouring to illustrate, which serves to mark the contrast between the present and the past, irrespective of the external mutations to which such scenes are subject.

That which I saw on this particular occasion was the most common form in which the Aurora Australis has been presented to my view: it rose in the shape of a low and long-extended arch of pale yellow light, from which at rapid intervals was emitted, to a height of fifty or sixty degrees, in a vertical direction, bright luminous rays of almost colourless matter. I have occasionally seen these beautiful

appearances varied considerably: the cloud-like band of yellow light at times assumes a redder hue; the vertical rays, flashing incessantly, obtain a varied brilliancy that inexpressibly dazzles and delights the eye. Only on one occasion, however, have I observed this phenomenon emitting in a distinct and evident form those many-coloured rainbow tints of which I have heard and read so much, and which I am inclined to think is of extremely rare occurrence. This was indeed a magnificent sight: the luminous bank of the Aurora rose to an elevation of at least twenty degrees, and glowed with a surpassing brilliancy, lighting up, as with a dozen moons, the darkness of a moonless night, and bringing into high relief by its soft bright effulgence along the entire line, the varied and peculiarly graceful foliage of the wild Australian Bush. The ray-like corruscations which darted from this glowing mass were intensely dazzling; and at their extreme height, in the lateral directions they then took, they burst into quivering sheets of flame, lighting up the whole scene with every variety of colour; those of red, green, and orange greatly preponderating; but all, from the great and peculiarly flitting rapidity of their emission, at times commingling, formed one grand and inconceivably beautiful illumination, in which the eye in vain might hope to single out, or mark the existence of, any distinct or discernible form or colour.

Thus wore away the first tedious night of my Bush experience, until the daylight dawned upon this memorable camp; and oh! what a blessed sight that daybreak was; how wonderful the change the first grey radiance wrought upon each living thing. Again a breathless silence reigned;

the same mysterious prelude to the day which marked the advent of the by-gone night inspired and permeated every atom of the transitory scene; the voices of the night were hushed: the spirit-stirring clamours of the day were yet in trembling stillness bound; the very "breezy call of incense-breathing morn," seemed for awhile suspended in the universal calm. Soon, however, those darkening mists that follow the first dawn and usher in the fullness of day, gave place to brighter light, and the broad sun, hailed by the countless things of life that people the wide Bush, again burst forth, and illumined that grand but rugged mountain scene.

By this time our horses had been gathered together near the camp; the never-to-be-forgotten pipe and pot of tea had been discussed, and in a few minutes more we were on our way, and the smouldering ashes of our last night's fire alone bore evidence of the wandering Bushman's lonely camp. It seems an age ago since such small incidents of ordinary Bush life had novelty enough to affect my mind so powerfully, and yet the memory of those curious thoughts and feelings is at times as fresh as if they had occurred but yesterday, and my now habituated indifference to similar scenes is only thus by memory's kindly aid dispelled, and gloomier thoughts, perhaps, averted.

No. 5.

AN ADVENTURE WITH THE BLACKS.

FAR away from the busy haunts of civilized man, unprotected by military or police, an adventurous band of "SQUATTERS," hemmed in by the daily encroachments of their agricultural neighbours, brought out by monied land proprietors, or pressed by their own rapidly-increasing flocks and herds; sought in more distant regions of the interior of this great "*terra incognita*" those broad acres of hill and plain, so absolutely essential to the success of pastoral avocations.

Among this little band the writer of these pages journeyed forth, and after long and arduous search selected as his squattage a very promising piece of country on the north-western skirts of the fertile district of New England. Rough and horribly tedious were our first struggles with the daily hardships and privations of this enterprising undertaking. Gradually, however, its difficulties began to lessen. its more pressing privations to decrease; our prospects of eventual success, by slow but sure degrees, assumed a brighter promise; huts had sprung up; sheds had been built; out-stations formed; and the ordinary routine of a Squatter's life was beginning decidedly to resume its old accustomed regularity.

Numerous depredations, however, on the part of the "Blacks," accompanied with acts of more or less violence, had frequently and seriously warned me, as well as others of my co-adventurers, of the imminent risks we were still daily incurring in these first efforts to people and subdue the solitude and savages of this vast wilderness.

Cattle had been speared and driven from our runs; sheep had been rushed and slaughtered; shepherds and stockmen hunted for bare life: but hitherto, in our immediate neighbourhood, no human blood had happily been shed, and sanguine hopes, in spite of conflicting experience, began to dawn upon our minds, that by patience and conciliating care we might yet be spared the horrors and atrocities of these vengeful collisions of the Aborigines, which ever result from this peculiarly treacherous and unequal warfare. But herein our hopes were destined to be rudely undeceived—our peaceful efforts to reclaim these wandering hordes were all delusive.

Towards the close of the autumn of '41, after a beautiful and most prosperous season, we were miserably startled from the unconscious lull of security which long-continued impunity from harm invariably produces, by the appalling intelligence that one of my out-stations had been attacked, its three unfortunate occupants brutally massacred, and the sheep, two thousand in number, carried off as spoils, together with whatever stores and implements the station had been provided. Accompanied by three neighbours, I immediately proceeded to reconnoitre the spot of this atrocity. The tracks, camp fires, and numerous *gunyahs*, indicated clearly the recent presence of a tribe of natives numbering, we surmised, at least two hundred. The hut was empty, but we could plainly perceive, by blood and other evidences of deadly struggle, that one at least of the unfortunate fellows had here met his dreadful end. A still further and more minute examination of every track and indication around revealed to our practised eyes, mysteriously but

unmistakeably, full evidences of the conduct of the whole catastrophe. The watchman, it was apparent, had been *sneaked* upon in his hut, and while in the act of turning or in some way attending to a "damper" baking in the ashes, speared in the back. The shepherds had been waylaid on their return with the flocks, and destroyed probably without the chance of an effort for their lives.

Our subsequent discovery of the bodies tended to verify the accuracy of these observations; we dragged the unfortunate fellows from a neighbouring water hole, and buried them with such decent rites as our limited means permitted; two of them, the shepherds, were literally riddled with spear-wounds; the watchman had received four spears in his loins, and in addition, the back of the skull—the occipital and posterior face of the sphênoid bones—was completely smashed to fragments by the waddies of these brutal savages.

Possessed of all the information which it was possible thus to obtain, we returned to arrange a party for immediate pursuit. Each of our men was savagely anxious and eager to be chosen for this painfully-imperative task; the thought of their butchered comrades, with sundry vivid reminiscences of personal escapes from a fate as dreadful, made them pant for an opportunity of vengeance on the heads of their wily and dangerous enemies. We made our selection from among them, however, upon other and I hope sounder grounds than could be gathered from the noisiest ebullition of excited feeling. Including my neighbouring friends, we mustered a party of ten, well mounted and accoutred, and taking with us ten days' provisions, we started at daybreak on the following morning in pursuit.

From all appearances the murderous villains must have had at least a five days' start of us; but the broad track of two thousand sheep gave small occasion to halt upon our progress, and the third day's journey brought us evidently very close upon their heels. We had by this time passed eight of their nightly camps, at each of which fresh witnesses to their plunder were abundantly apparent. Well-remembered pass-boxes, the recent property of the murdered men, boots, scraps of paper, torn rags, old sugar bags, and other useless refuse of their spoils, were discarded; while the remains of the numerous carcases of sheep, bones, heads, &c., bore ample testimony to the extent of their nightly meals. During the latter part of this day's journey we perceived with much annoyance that they had headed us more and more for the broken country, near the main dividing range, in the direction of the heads of the south branch of the Clarence, and towards night we were scarcely able to make headway, for the roughness and steepness of the broken ground over which they had passed. Still we struggled on as best we could, anxious to obtain a position close to their this night's camp, fearing from the altered and difficult road they were now pursuing, that they must have observed or in some way suspected our approach. We were compelled to halt, however, without obtaining more substantial evidences of their proximity than could be gathered from the recent sheep-tracks over which we were passing, and which were clearly not many hours old. We chose our camp in the bed of a deep gully at the foot of the mountain over which the Blacks had steered their course. In this selection we were influenced mainly by the desire

of concealment, the night being somewhat too chilly to dispense with fires. There was in our immediate neighbourhood also an abundance of pure water, plenty of long but rather too dry grass, for the use of the cattle, and the encircling mountains, thickly covered with scrub and dry timber, afforded us no lack of fuel. Here, then, we arranged our quarters, refreshed our inner man, talked over our plans, and resolved upon the details of the morrow's contemplated attack.

No sooner, however, had the twilight shadows faded and the darkness of a moonless night fairly enshrouded us, than we had reason to apprehend that the spot of our selection would turn out neither one of refuge nor of rest. It was very evident we had been discovered or observed; the affrighted snorts of the horses, an occasional cracking of dead timber, as if being trodden down by some passing foot, the harsh rustling of dry underwood, the startled fluttering of birds, were sounds sufficiently ominous to arouse our utmost vigilance and anxiety.

Our horses were quickly gathered together; each looked to the priming of his gun; the fires were extinguished; watch parties posted; and everything as far as possible prepared to guard against surprise. Hour after hour we waited, however, without attack; the scouts came in, and feeling somewhat ashamed of our apparently groundless apprehensions, we began to think our nerves must have been too much unstrung after our late excitement, we therefore deemed it incumbent to seek some rest preparatory to the labours of the ensuing day. Fixing a regular watch, and advising the utmost caution, we at length betook our-

selves to repose. The briefest possible slumber fell to my individual lot, for suddenly an alarm of "fire," and the startling cry of "the Blacks! the Blacks! effectually dispelled all feeling of drowsiness. For some moments, however, we were utterly unable to perceive or appreciate the exact nature of our hazardous position. A bright and rapidly-increasing glare of light, pouring down in circling eddies from the hills, and sweeping the grassy gullies at our feet, surrounded us and effectually excluded every distant object from our observation. In this perplexity two or three heavy spears darting amongst us sufficiently indicated the whereabouts and intention of our agile though invisible foes; we discharged four barrels in their direction, and immediately a yell, the wildest and the most fraught with fear ears ever heard, rang through the burning forest. No time was evidently now to be lost; a moment's delay might for aught we knew prove fatal. By one portion of the party our horses were saddled and all prepared for immediate movement, while the other, with leafy boughs of trees, set vigorously to work to stop the approach of the raging element, which every moment came more near with fierce and rapid sweeps, blinding our eyes to all beyond its livid circle of flame. This at length, but with much difficulty, was accomplished, and lighted by the now extended circle of blazing timber that spread on all sides like a bright horizon round us, we proceeded in search of the late intruders, but in vain, no trace of their existence could be discovered; they had vanished as effectually as if they had never been in the land of the living.

In an incredibly short space of time the whole range of

mountains was on fire; miles of long dry grass, thousands of huge trees, and all the dense mass of withered underwood by which they were encompassed, were enveloped in one enormous unapproachable flame: to proceed through this vast burning mass was obviously impossible; retreat, however, seemed equally hazardous; no course apparently was left but to await the coming day and force our way, if practicable, towards where some creek or water-course might reasonably be expected to have intervened to check the spread of this disastrous fire. If no such spot should be discovered, farewell to all prospect of regaining the lost flocks. The case was nearly hopeless; we could not help calculating somewhat, however, upon the peculiar ingenuity of our enemies, nor herein were we much deceived, for when the sun was fairly up we faintly descried through the dense clouds of lurid smoke that almost quenched the light of day, a wavy line of clearer atmosphere, towards which, at imminent hazard from the falling timber that blazed and burst in every direction round us, we urged our anxious way. All tracks of sheep, of course, were lost in this black and dismal spot; but pushing on, we at length descried, to our inexpressible joy, an open mountain spur, divided from us by a rocky creek, running at right angles with our former course, untouched by the ravaging flames, and standing out like a bright and beautiful oasis in the black and calcined desert by which it was surrounded. As we approached, a wider prospect opened around us; far away in the grassy valleys to our left our sheep were feeding onwards, tended and driven apparently by the Gins and Picannies of the tribe. But what of the Blacks themselves? Where could they be?

We knew too much of their habits not to suspect the approach of mischief, even from this slight appearance of incautious exposure. The question, unhappily, was soon resolved, a shower of spears and *boomarangs* came flying into our party, four or five of the former striking with deadly aim the unfortunate fellow, who, in charge of the commissariat, was bringing up the rear. On three sides we were beset; each tree appeared to have produced its man, so sudden and startling was their apparition-like approach. Exasperation broke all bounds of prudence and order, and dashing at them, each man as he listed, I soon found myself alone, flying up the scorching hills in wild but profitless pursuit of the quick and snakelike savages, for upon our first discharge they had dispersed in every direction. Searching with reckless haste, I climbed the steep and rugged tracks which wound upwards round the side of the next adjacent mountain, until the ascent became so steep my panting horse could barely stand. No sooner had I fairly halted, than a yell of exultation rang in my ears, and descending towards me from two opposite sides of the mountain, with rapid strides, fierce gleaming eyes, and weapons quivering in their excited hands, a party of these frightful savages were hurriedly approaching. The moment was a fearful one ; the almost perpendicular side of the mountain open to my retreat was thickly strewn with large and rugged granite boulders, the deep sand in which they were but partially imbedded, unstable as water, scarce needed the lightest pressure of the foot, the slightest conceivable impulse, to release them from their tottering height, and hurl them thundering into the deep abyss, through which

the sparkling waters of the surrounding hills found egress to the plains. Upon the opposite side of this terrific gorge a mass of rock opposed its rugged face to my escape. Destruction seemed inevitable, but any death was preferable to that of butchery at the hands of these insatiate wretches; so with what coolness I could command, and with an aim as steady as circumstances would admit, I discharged one barrel at each mass of my approaching foes, wheeled round my brave old horse, and dashed headlong towards the yawning chasm beneath. At three bounds he was down the mountain, the huge boulders crashing at his heels, the yell of death and disappointed rage still ringing in my ears: the terrific gorge gaping to receive my bruised and lifeless form still rivetted my fascinating gaze; nearing it, until its terrible depths became apparent to my bewildered brain. Involuntarily I closed my eyes; my dizzy senses reeled—I held my failing breath like one falling in a frightful dream from giddy heights, expecting momentarily the fatal crash that should at once annihilate me.

Not so the gallant steed, whose sinewy limbs had borne me thus far scathless; with measured stride and powerful bound, he flew at the terrific gulf, cleared the adjacent rocks, and with a tremendous leap landed me unharmed and safely on the opposite bank. By this time our party had again assembled, and, directed by the infuriated shouts of my savage pursuers, arrived in time to ward off further attack, and to chastise them soundly for their unwonted temerity.

I experienced much difficulty in escaping from the rocky perch whereon my noble horse had landed me, the descent from which was truly hazardous. However, I at length

got safely down, and having reached the plains, arranged operations for the night, and taken a slight refreshment, we pushed on in the direction of the sheep. Towards evening their tracks led us again in the direction of the mountains, to a gap, or bog, in one of which, for the night's encampment, they were evidently tending. The utmost circumspection here appeared to be imperative; it was obvious to any practised observation that all our steps were closely watched, and their every moment regulated by our own. We determined, therefore, to proceed slowly and cautiously direct towards the gap, into which the sheep, at least, had certainly preceded us, until darkness should permit a change of course without immediate chance of observation. We then proposed taking a circuit from our apparent course, and endeavour to obtain a higher point on one of the adjacent hills, whence we might securely view their force and contemplate operations.

Towards nightfall we descried their fires; the bleating of the sheep and the yelping of their dogs became also distinctly audible. Dismounting at this point, and leaving a strong party in charge of our horses, with strict injunctions to push forward in the event of any skirmish, the remainder of our party crept into the Bush, and taking a wide and ascended circle mounted the jagged rocks which overhung their camp. Here a scene of most astounding wildness was presented to our gaze; a perfect amphitheatre lay beneath us, formed by a mass of perpendicular rocks, whose bare and rugged faces would have afforded scarcely sufficient room for an eagle's nest; except that about midway from the smooth bottom of the glen, on which the camp

fires dimly blazed, and the height on which we stood, there appeared to be a rough projecting ledge running round nearly the entire of the two opposite curves of this strange and quarry-like spot. A few moments' careful examination revealed to our wondering senses the wily stratagem by which these savage warriors had intended to beguile us into almost inevitable destruction.

The projecting ledge of rock, which was about a hundred feet below us, and apparently about a similar height above the floor of the gap, was thickly thronged with the fighting men of the tribe, each armed powerfully with heavy spears, but most of them carrying a boomerang and waddie. Huge stones, also, lay piled about, apparently from their position destined for warlike purposes; and had we but in this instance approached with the incautious haste which usually distinguishes the white man's mode of dealing with these much despised Aborigines, our total destruction could hardly, in all human probability, have been avoided. Hurriedly edging our way towards the mouth of the apparent ascent to the rocky platform, we were startled by the discharge of a gun proceeding from the party below. An ominous stir among the Blacks in the direction of this spot alarmed us for the safety of our friends, and reminded us of the necessity for immediate action.

Pouring in, therefore, upon the eager but unconscious crowd below the contents of ten barrels, a fearful change was effected in their savage glee; a scream of mingled consternation and surprise, a rush in reckless despair towards the only means of escape from their exposed and dangerous elevation; a murderous and tumultuous struggle amongst

themselves; their yells of mingled hate and agony, as grappling together in the last grasp of death the foremost of them fell, urged over the ledge's brink by the pressing crowd behind that madly hurried on, into the yawning sepulchre beneath, was all of the horrid scene that the increasing darkness of the night enabled us clearly to perceive.

We had now reloaded, and our party from below pushing forward to the scene of conflict, poured in a deadly volley upon the thronging crowds that lined the rocky entrance to this fatal ledge—back flew the despairing wretches from that dreadful spot—again a volley from our party on the heights dealt frightful havoc in their ranks. The utmost wildness of despair now seized upon them all; some actually dashed themselves in frantic violence to the depths beneath, in utter heedlessness of life. One solitary tree grew in this fatal glen; its topmost limbs reaching almost to the level of their feet; with faint remains of hope, some of the youngest and most active of the tribe sprang at its fragile boughs in vain—few grasped its treacherous aid, where, quivering for a moment on its yielding branches, their latest shrieks of dying agony, mingling with the mass beneath, too plainly told the dreadful fate they sought to shun, but only had anticipated. Sick of the horrid carnage below, I fain would have retired from the dreadful spot, but all my efforts, entreaties, threats, were utterly useless. Shot after shot, with curses wild and deep, the excited fellows launched at their hated foes—their butchered comrades' blood was that night fearfully avenged!

It is by no means my intention to dwell upon the subse-

details of this miserable catastrophe; its salutary consequences were, however, sufficiently apparent, not only in the future safety of the Squatter's life and property, but also in the comfort and security of the numerous native tribes that dwell in the mountain ranges of that district. Deeply impressed with a mysterious and superstitious fear of the stupendous power of the white man, they at once renounced all thought but that of serving or conciliating him; and from that day, and in that particular district, scarcely a depredation of any consequence has been committed, and human life has almost invariably obtained that sacred reverence so essential to mutual safety.

On the other hand, the formerly wild and savage Blackfellow, now harmless, tractable, and *subdued*, soon gained for himself, first the toleration, then the kind regards of all his white brethren with whom he came in contact; and, as a necessary consequence, those barbarous and inhuman *secret* murders, by poison, or by some violent and remorseless treachery, of which in preceding times I had so frequently heard and read, were happily now abolished.

With the occasion for fear, the persecution of these roving tribes entirely disappeared, and a good and kindly feeling has grown up on all hands, brought about in some measure, I have no doubt, either by the dreadful and apparently inauspicious commencement, of which the above presents some of the leading features, or of other such affrays probably somewhat similar in their nature, conduct, and result.

Of my flocks in this adventure, about seventeen hundred

were recovered ; and without any further molestation we retraced our steps to those quiet humble roofs, which, by a figure of speech not unfrequent even among the dwellers in bark huts and tents, we find ourselves occasionally denominating HOME!

No. 6.—THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

THE Aboriginal inhabitants of this vast Continent present such perceptible peculiarities of organization and physical quality, as to render it peculiarly difficult correctly to define their origin, or assign to them any satisfactory place in the somewhat arbitrary arrangement of the human species. The ancient inhabitants of Italy, from whom the designation of Aborigines is derived, were certainly in no greater degree "*absque origine*" than are the singular beings of whom this paper treats, and to whom the title of Aboriginal is more correctly applied, as expressing the obscurity of their origin, than as denoting, in its mere popular sense, that they are the primitive inhabitants of the land—for in this particular much doubt may reasonably prevail.

If it were necessary to include them in any one of the divisions into which Physiologists have partitioned the human race, it would seem safest upon the whole to assign them a place in the Malay division, to which they are, I think, invariably assumed to belong—and this division includes very many varieties, so wide indeed as to admit of almost every imaginable grade of difference, from light brown to black; from short to tall; from handsome to hideous; from fierce to docile—and even in their diverse attributes, to comprehend the extremes from conspicuous intelligence to brute-like idiotcy.

The generality of the Australian Aborigines inhabiting the middle and best-known districts of the country, are of a deep olive-black complexion, with abundant jet and

slightly-curling hair, narrow and receding foreheads; large and prominent facial bones; full flat noses, increasing in breadth towards the apex; and with the large mouths, thick lips, and prominent jaws, characteristic of the Negro.

The common supposition that these people are descendants of the Malay proper, and that they came over from the peninsula of Malacca at some distant date, may, I think, be assumed as highly probable—the aboriginal inhabitants of that island, prior to its population from Sumatra, appear to have been a race of men very closely approximating in their qualities to the Negroes of Africa. As we approach the northern portions of Australia, tribes of a lighter olive complexion, and of a pale copper colour, with higher physical and intellectual characteristics, longer hair, more oval countenances, and finer forms, are frequently met with, approaching, indeed, very nearly in organization and manners to the superior order of the present Malay—whereas, proceeding southward, the reverse of these particulars, with but few exceptions, is observable; and in Van Diemen's Land, our extreme south, the Aborigines very nearly resemble the Negro, or at any rate, the Negro-like Papuah of New Guinea; and this could hardly be the case unless upon the supposition that the dispossessed and inferior natives of Malacca, when, in the first place, driven by the Sumatrans or some other superior race of the Eastern Pacific, from their native isle, they took refuge in considerable numbers, not only among the Western Islands, but also upon Australia's neighbouring shores, and in course of time, from their still proximate position, were again compelled to recede before their conquering and warlike neighbours, thus

spreading themselves southward through the woods and mountains of this immense Continent. Such an hypothesis, however, would seem to be founded on the supposition that Australia had no indigenous inhabitants of its own, which I am loth to take for granted, because I cannot help perceiving a wide distinction between the present natives and that of any other race hitherto seen—a distinction which the peculiarities of climate and local circumstances are altogether insufficient to account for. I rather incline, therefore, to the opinion, that the original Malay tribes, when driven from their land, in the 12th century, by the usurping Sumatrans, sought shelter and refuge on these shores, and in process of time, as they were forced onward into our vast northern wilderness, they mixed and ultimately became blended with the Aborigines whom they here discovered; and that thus it may perhaps be, that we have here at once such a distinct race, yet at the same time combining with their distinctness such wide and numerous varieties of form and character. I cannot perceive upon any other theory how this combined distinctiveness and variety can be accounted for; nor how it is that they should, as they approach Van Diemen's Land, assume a nearer similitude to the Negro.

The present Malays in the peninsula of Malacca are, it is understood, very superior beings to any we have on this Continent; and the native tribes at our extreme north are exceedingly—and not without apparent reason—afraid of them; but whether this fear may have derived encouragement from traditionary evidence of their conquerors' power and cruelty, or from a consciousness of their present manifest inferiority, is of course mere matter of conjecture.

The important fact that no actual sign of their former condition, no tangible record of the past, exists among these scattered wanderers of the wilderness, is of course explanatory of the doubt and difficulty which attends all attempts to mark their progress or decipher any of the stages of their singular history. To the eye of the casual observer they are a curious anomaly—a complicated enigma, to which there is no given clue. You find them in a state af barbarism which seems incapable of improvement—below which it appears impossible to descend, and above which there is no trace or visible sign of their having ever existed. They seem to stand, as it were, alone—stationary in their primitive barbarism—and in their career (whatever period may be assigned to it,) to have experienced neither advancement nor retrogression—improvement nor degeneration. And it requires a long acquaintance with, and a careful consideration of, their various customs, habits, superstitions, and pursuits, before that sense of the impossibility of obtaining any clear insight into the history of their past—which checks mere curiosity, and seems to baffle even patient investigation—can ever be overcome.

There are here not only none of those indications which mark the gradual rise of almost every infant community from barbarism to civilization, which stamp its customs, mark its growth, or record its laws and constitution. The Australian Aborigines are, and appear to have ever been, utterly destitute of even the rudest attempts to perpetuate one sign or trace of their career—no monument, however rude, no sculptured rock or stone, however transitory or

uncouth—no hieroglyphics, no tally-sticks, no figurative paintings, quipos, medals, symbols, nor typical illustration, no record of any kind—is found amongst them, to help even the most imaginative speculator towards a probable conclusion as to what their past has been. From the present only can be drawn the faintest trace of their bygone history—from the remains of anomalous customs still adhered to, and from peculiarities which have evidently survived their original applicability, can alone be derived the slightest clue to such enquiries.

I purpose enumerating a few of the leading peculiarities, with a view of affording a general insight into their character, and of deducing especially from that most inscrutable but unmistakeable ordination of nature, their gradual and unceasing approach to extinction—such small but inferential relics of the past as seem only to have arisen (like sad mementos of the past,) before the long shadowy precursors of the coming night had passed away, and all was swallowed up in impenetrable oblivion.

A very serious and deeply-interesting subject is thus suggested. The apparently inevitable decree of fate which marks this progressive distinction, seems not to be peculiar to the Aboriginal Natives of Australia only, but to extend its terrible doom as well along the shores of the Atlantic, as over the innumerable islands of the great Polynesian group. It is, therefore, a most important subject to reflect upon. The marked principle thus lamentably indicated is almost universal. It rears its desolating hand alike among the superior native races of America, Malacca, Tahiti, or New Zealand, as among the inferior orders inhabiting Australia,

New Caledonia, the Fejees, and other of the many islands in the western Pacific. The causes of this gradual but continuous progress towards extinction in Australia demand, from the deeply interesting nature of the investigation, a moment's serious consideration, whilst treating somewhat upon the unhappy subjects of my present remarks.

Having as briefly as possible endeavoured to explain my views of their probable origin, I proceed to examine them under their present circumstances, regarding particularly some of their customs, with reference not only to their position as it now is, but as compared with and referring to the condition from which they would appear to have sprung.

One great and most important cause of the extinction of the race is undeniably evident in the barbarous custom of Infanticide, and in that custom, too, more particularly in the destruction of their female offspring. The practice of polygamy is also a relative and important element to be considered, in endeavouring to trace the effects of this great source of decimation and decay.

It appears to me to be really monstrous to doubt, that these cotemporaneous customs had not some sort of sanction from circumstances. I regard it as quite impossible to conceive that such revolting and conflicting usages could have originated without some powerful apparent cause; at any rate, it would be most unjustifiable to suppose that such could have been established in direct opposition to the manifest wants and interests of their society. As far as we can ascertain from history, the practice of Infanticide has only been recorded against people sunk very low in the depths of poverty, and teeming with surplus population, a state of

society clearly indicative of most unnatural social disorders. With polygamy it has not been a custom forced upon society by poverty, but has been adopted by countries where the ravages and spoils of war, whilst they have to a great extent decimated the male population, and created an unnatural disproportion of the sexes, has at the same time enriched the nation and encouraged habits of luxury and self-indulgence. Most of the nations of antiquity encouraged polygamy; it was almost universal amongst the ancient Jews, and still exists to a great extent among the Turks and Persians. In Medea, and parts of Persia, it was a positive disgrace to any man of reputation to possess less than seven wives; these, however, are but effects springing from well-known causes. In this country we find no causes for such now justly-condemned customs, and the destruction of female offspring, together with the co-existing monopoly of two or more wives by the elder and stronger of our aboriginal tribes, can only have been the result of powerful pre-existing causes; they could not possibly have arisen under circumstances such as those under which we now contemplate them; but admitting them to have been customs forced upon this degraded people, and established or encouraged by circumstances, it is not difficult to imagine how, even under their present altered position, the errors and vicious practices of their ancestors may, by a blind infatuation or unthinking prejudice, be perpetuated—similar slavish subservience to the tyranny of custom, in many of its forms, may be observed in not a few of our so-called civilized habits and pursuits, and in many of our time-honoured institutions. Here, at the present time, a marked feature amongst all our abori-

ginal tribes is the great preponderance of males over females, and expediency would now, of course, suggest the most careful preservation of their female offspring—such, however, is not the practice. The custom of polygamy, indulged in, too, by the more potent savages of the tribes, excluding as of necessity it does, the greater proportion of their young men from the possession of a wife, (or "gin,") is a fact in operation still further aggravating the already too great disproportion of the sexes, which the custom of infanticide helps to occasion. Polygamy, therefore, among these tribes is a most unaccountable institution, if we suppose its origin to have been under circumstances in any way similar to their present condition; and all these conspiring evidences point clearly to an era in the history of these curious people, the existence of which in some measure enlightens us as to the past, and relieves us from the onus of being the immediate instrument of their apparently inevitable destruction. In that dark and distant age, thus faintly shadowed forth, we may not hope, perhaps, to find a record, but may still be pardoned for endeavouring to trace in dubious signs and rude remains of pre-existing forms and usages, a probable estimate of the state and condition whence such signs and usages could consistently have sprung. It is in this manner that I deduce from the consistency of evidence such as those alluded to, a reasonable probability of their former great numerical superiority, at a time, too, when the proportion of the sexes may have admitted, without the immediate and, in fact, intolerable evils which it now exhibits, of an appropriation of numerous "gins" by one or two of the Seniors of the tribe; at such a

time also, perhaps, when the same great sexual disproportion might appear to have sanctioned (to their barbarous notions of policy,) the horrible and now justly-execrated custom of female infanticide. In fact, from all the evidences which I have been enabled to collect, either by reading or personal observation, it appears to be beyond doubt that the Aborigines of this Continent must at one time have been an extremely numerous people; that their incessant internal wars must have so reduced their male population, as to have justified the custom of polygamy to its greatest extent, but to have even so far decimated their male youth and fighting men, and caused so serious an inequality of the sexes, as to have afforded an apparent sanction to the barbarous contemporaneous custom of female infanticide.

At what distant date this condition may have existed it is impossible to say; except from such inferential relics as these there are no traces backward, no evidence of prior existence; no indication of numbers; no mark of antiquity, improvement, nor retrogression, records their past career; "*vestigia nulla retrorsum.*" A blank, unbroken by any other tangible event, severs their present from the past.

But the assumption of these pre-existing conditions, although of importance in considering the probable origin of such customs, is by no means essential to the fact of the present and continuous decrease alluded to. Whatever may have been the true origin of those evils, it is matter of undeniable observation, that from them our native tribes do now, and must of necessity continue to, decrease, irrespective of the white man's influence. The disproportion of the sexes resulting from female infanticide, added to the extra-

ordinary anomaly of a co-existing custom of polygamy, ministers indirectly as well as directly to their gradual extinction. The decreased fecundity of the women thus circumstanced is a fact scientifically demonstrated, and adds its important influence in contributing to this result. No black "gin" that I have ever seen has had a large family; two or three children is, I believe, the extreme number which they bear, and very many are entirely barren. There appear to exist no degrees of superiority or influence among the several wives possessed by any of the chiefs, beyond that which their personal prowess can establish. Other causes doubtless exist which tend to hasten on this final catastrophe; but those to which I have alluded, and the consequent fearfully degraded position of their women, (who are literally the beasts of burden to the community, and in times of dearth of provision are invariably the last to be considered as having such an inconvenient thing as an appetite,) together with their general exposed, dirty, and irregular mode of existence,) are perhaps the most immediate and important. And these are causes quite irrespective of their European neighbours, but attributable wholly to their own wretched and debased condition. Another cause, to which I will only briefly allude, is to be found in an invariable custom which prevails amongst them when any of their tribe dies: no matter from what cause, another from a neighbouring tribe is sacrificed to the manes of their departed friend, and thus innumerable wars, and a vast and continually increasing destruction of life is established and maintained. I remember an instance of an old black fellow dying of as near an approach to old age as may be con-

ceived; but, as usual, he was questioned after death by one of the sapient mischief-makers of his tribe, who elicited, or pretended to elicit, from him, a report to the effect that his death was caused by the influence or connivance of some one belonging to a neighbouring tribe, doubtless pitched upon by the old villain out of spite; the consequence of which of course was, a demand for vengeance on the head of the unfortunate victim thus selected. The usual fighting then ensued, and several on either side were killed; each of whom having been likewise supposed to impart after his death the name of his murderer, occasioned still further necessity for slaughter. In this manner an idea may perhaps be obtained of the effect of this destructive custom. These battles of course have their terminations, but in the space of two years I witnessed, as nearly as I could estimate, the destruction of between sixty and seventy lives out of two tribes residing on or near my station, the result entirely of this custom. It is strange how decidedly this decrease is visible also among the vastly superior tribes of the islands of New Zealand, but even there, it is confidently predicted by competent authorities, that in spite of every exertion which philanthropical benevolence can devise, the time is fast approaching when the native race will utterly disappear. In such a case as that, it is indeed doubly lamentable that so fine and intelligent a branch of the human family should thus be doomed to extinction.

It is not my object for one moment to deny that the Colonists of Australia have materially contributed to hasten the downfall of this aboriginal race; although I firml

dispute the assumption that they have been its primary cause. Unhappily, with the introduction of civilization sundry new vices seem inevitably to spring up. Among these the influence and the effect of the vice of drunkenness is one, against which the weak and imperfect organization of the Aborigines of this Continent appears least able to cope. They cannot resist the temptation to indulge in hurtful stimulants, and their impaired vital powers soon sink under their terrible effects: thus, unhappily, have they dwindled and died away by hundreds. The intercourse of the black "gin" with the male of European origin,—a connexion which their total ignorance of the existence of such a thing as constancy or chastity renders an act of constant occurrence— tells fatally also upon their powers of reproduction. It is asserted by competent medical authorities that the effect of such an intercourse destroys for ever their natural fecundity; that although the female is enabled to bear children to an European father, (which offspring, under ordinary circumstances, are immediately destroyed,) they are thereafter completely incapacitated to bear offspring to any of their own race. This asserted fact I am not able positively to attest, but have very little doubt of its entire truth; that it is correct to a great extent is well authenticated, and my own observation presents no single exception to the rule. This, therefore, may be regarded as another and a very important means of accelerating their total extinction. The occupation by flocks and herds of large portions of the territory over which their meagre hunting operations were formerly extended, is an evil added to the list of those imported by the Colonists, which must not

be omitted from these considerations, although I do not consider this cause of so much importance as is generally attributed to it. The country, naturally scant of game for purposes of food, is of course rendered thus still further unproductive. It must be borne in mind, however, that this is chiefly felt by tribes whose dispositions lead them to hang about the neighbourhood of towns and stations, and scarcely applies to those who choose to remain in their wilderness, and retire before the advance of the Stockholder, who spreads his occupation far and wide, over the fertile portion of the interior, for to such a more than ordinary amount of game is furnished by the self-same means which drives them forth. The Kangaroo and Wallaby, in particular, are not slow in retiring before this sort of encroachment on their quiet resorts, and therefore, skirting the inhabited country, an unusual number of these very important items to the aboriginal game-list may invariably be found; the evident effect of this sort of occupation being to collect into smaller space, as well as drive before it, the thinly-scattered animals which formerly occupied its wastes; and I do not think, therefore, that at present much real injury has been inflicted upon the interior tribes by the sort of occupation here alluded to. Unfortunately, however, too many of them prefer the idle dissolute life which the neighbourhood of a town affords, and thus in a great measure follows the suicidal destruction attributed to their evil associations with their white brethren.

This contact is perhaps of greater consequence than it is usually supposed to be; for there is a moral degradation, even to these deeply-degraded beings, in their associations

with civilized men, which sensibly affects and enervates alike their mental and physical energies; a result which an imperfect organization is unable to overcome, and which adds its quota therefore to the other causes leading to their destruction. Every circumstance ministering to the civilization with which they are surrounded, but in which they cannot share—everything, from the most important article of luxury, the ships in our harbour, the superior buildings in our towns, down to the meanest trifle of domestic utility, is an exhibition of superiority which they cannot hope to equal: and while they indulge in some of the ruinous vices of the town, their feigned contempt of, or it may be, their natural antipathy to, these appliances to health and comfort, forbids them from partaking in their utility or enjoying their ease. A manifest deficiency in the organ of constructiveness is often cited as the chief obstacle to their social improvement; but it would appear to require the absence of other organs to prove why it is, that they invariably refuse to inhabit houses which the skill or benevolence of others may have prepared for them. The absence of constructiveness, although undoubtedly an important deficiency in their mental organism, is, however, quite insufficient to account for their unconquerable preference to the nomadic habits which have always so peculiarly distinguished them. An enumeration of a few of the leading traits which distinguish their domestic condition will help to shew how low and wretched is their true position in the human family.

The most noticeable thing upon entering a camp is, of course, that its inhabitants, male and female, old and young, are, with few exceptions, "*in puris naturalibus*," or, in

plain English, stark naked. I have often seen them in this state, although possessed of plenty of opossum rugs, when the thermometer has been considerably below freezing point.

They really seem to like this state of nature better than being covered. A black boy, who travelled with me for some years, and was well and warmly clad, was in the invariable habit of doffing all his apparel at night, for no other reason, as far as I could understand, than that he had a more immediate enjoyment of the warmth of the fire, beside which he would lay, turning and gradually roasting himself, as if he were some particularly delicate joint, which required to be slowly and carefully done. I never could persuade him to keep himself covered from choice, although I did often make him try the experiment for my satisfaction; and this feeling, strange as it may seem, appears to be very general.

Among other urgent wants, it will be immediately observed, that they have no culinary implements capable of resisting fire; boiling any of their provisions is, therefore, out of the question; their most ordinary mode of cooking is to broil or roast upon the burning embers of their little fires.

The only attempt at a cooking apparatus that I have ever seen, has been a kind of steaming oven, made of stone or clay, sometimes scooped out of the ground, sometimes raised a little above it. In this oven they effect their nearest approach to boiling food, and this is mostly made use of for the preparation of the strong edible roots or vegetables, which they gather wild from the ground. The process of

the steaming operation is simple: the oven, being open at the top, is fully heated by the largest fire which its dimensions will admit; when ready, the roots, &c. to be cooked are, together with a quantity of green leaves, wet grass, &c., thrown in; the aperture is then partially built up, leaving only a very small hole, through which water is poured in upon the burning stones or clay beneath; this hole is then stopped by wet clay, until the so-called vegetables are considered to be done. This is the most elaborate piece of cookery in which they indulge, and the circumstance that many of these roots, if not so prepared, will take the skin off their mouths, from their exceeding pungency, may perhaps point out the strong necessity which has driven them to this unusual exercise of ingenuity.

They have a variety of uncouth ceremonies, which they perform prior to cooking certain viands, which rightly to understand requires more careful scrutiny than I have ever had leisure to bestow; such, for instance, as breaking the bones of the legs, cutting the flesh on either side of the breast-bone, disjointing particular parts, &c.; which performances do not appear upon casual observation to have any actual utility, but to be the results either of custom or superstition.

The rules which obtain as to the prohibition of certain kinds of food at particular ages, and during various stages of their monotonous lives are very remarkable. They change, however, with each period of life, and in most instances are the evident results of very pressing circumstauces. It will be observed, that many more restrictions are imposed

upon females than males, and that the old men, with the young married, and the fighting men of the tribe, are the most highly favoured by these regulations; probably from the fact of their being the makers and administers of the laws, and in a position to help themselves.

It is curious also to notice how almost all their so-called delicacies are denied most absolutely to the boys and girls, even many of the more ordinary necessaries being kept back from them until a very late period of life. These prohibitions, however, although they have the general tendency to appropriate the most and best for the benefit of the Seniors and most powerful in the tribe, are nevertheless particularly distinguished, and enforced with a solemnity not unworthy some of the superstitious advantages claimed by the Elders, in far more advanced conditions of our species. In most instances when they are rigidly tabooed, they are faithfully and unhesitatingly obeyed, even under the combined temptations of excessive hunger, and a certain immunity from discovery; so that, like many among the poor Irish peasantry, the Aborigines of the Interior would sooner starve than allay their hunger upon certain things which have either been untasted by them, or hitherto prohibited by custom, or the special interdiction of their Seniors. On this subject many very sad but still amusing anecdotes are told. The devoted attachment of the "*genus Hibernorum*" to his abominable potatoe, and the ridiculous sacrifices he makes to obtain that tuberous desideratum, are cases in point, and perfectly in keeping with the character and idiosyncracies of all uncultivated races; with the superiority, perhaps, on the side of the genuine Savage, that he,—owing

to a general scarcity and precariousness of food, is trained to these peculiar deprivations by the cunning policy of his Seniors, who use their privilege of strength and age to the appropriation of the best which the country will afford; while the other, in blind uncalculating stupidity, has nothing to adduce in support of his slavish adherence to the tyranny of custom, but the mere fact that he has always done so—never tastes bacon, though he grows it in abundance—never tried the sea-bird, nor the fish, that with a little trouble or ingenuity might well help out his scanty fare; and just because he never did taste or see any of his fellows eat such things, he never means to try them, tempt and assure him of their goodness as you may—consequently he often thus is starving in the midst of plenty, and so it is here. I have seen a black boy, crying with hunger, refuse to eat the young of the opossum, although hundreds of miles from his tribe, because it was a delicacy reserved for his Seniors; and as he wanted some months of the age when he would be allowed to indulge in such fare, he preferred starving outright. There was certainly something honourable in his sacrifice, particularly as his eating it could in this instance have injured no one.

They perform a variety of initiatory ceremonies upon the youth of both sexes, at the age of puberty; such as scarification, punching out a front tooth, and other monstrosities, which are perfectly incomprehensible; there are a few customs also peculiarly enforced upon the females, which are not adapted for the pages of a mere popular outline of their character; but which still evince the grand operation of the right of might, in a very undisguised and even cruel manner.

Their weapons of offence, which in general are simple, consist principally of a great variety of Spears, Boomerangs, Waddies, Nulla-Nullas, &c. Their spears are sometimes barbed, sometimes plainly pointed, according to the purpose they have in view when about to use them ; they are mostly thrown by hand, but in some districts the important assistance of the "*Wamra*," or Throwing-Stick, is added, which greatly increases the efficiency of the weapon. The Boomerang is a curious example of a rough intuitive application of scientific principles; it is a thin slab of wood cut into an irregular curve of the rudest description, and varies slightly in form according to the whim or skilfulness of the manufacturer. By continued practice the natives become very expert in its use, both as an instrument for the exhibition of skill or amusement, and as an effective missile in their numerous deadly encounters.

Sir Thomas Mitchell has very scientifically and successfully adapted the form of this peculiar curve in the construction of a Boomerang Screw Propeller, for the use of Steam Vessels, the advantage of which has been already satisfactorily tested and proved on the magnificent waters of Port Jackson. The "Waddie" is a mere club, and is used as such. The "Nulla-Nulla" is a straight stick, which they throw with great force and accuracy, making it strike the ground and bound thence to the object at which it is cast. Their only defensive weapon is the Heilieman, or Shield, which is a long narrow ledge of wood, with a hand-hole cut into the back, and is principally used to ward off spears, and nulla-nullas; this slight defence they use with surprising skill in their regular warlike expeditions.

There are, as far as I have been able to discover, no Chiefs, nor hereditary Superiors, in any of the tribes; the only influence amongst them being exercised either by the old men—who not unfrequently assume supernatural attributes; that is to say, an unusual power for inflicting evil; or by those whose superior activity of intellect, or probably physical power, entitles them by force of arms to this position. There is, however, nothing approaching to Patriarchal government or authority even in this respect.

They often meet together in large numbers, at which time an observer might fancy, from their alternating fits of dullness and vociferation, that they were assembled in solemn and important conclave, but in reality the imparting of news or the arrangement of future signals, appears to be the chief object of discussion; and even here the form of separating themselves into classes, the old and young men at the head, near the fires, and the women and weaker ones anywhere but at the privileged places, where anything is likely to be got—even if it be only warmth and shelter—is very manifest; and if it be true that the status of the women of a country is a fair criterion of the civilization to which its people have attained, verily no stronger proof of humanity's deepest degradation need be cited against the Australian Aborigines.

They have absolutely no religion—no sense of a Superior Beneficent Being, no idea whatever of a Creator. It is indeed astonishing how little perception they possess of what is usually accounted one of the most natural impulses of the mind, an idea of some sort respecting a Superior Creative and Sustaining Being. Unlike the earliest institutions of

most uncivilized races, theirs enforce no polytheism, no idolatry, no whimsical mythologies, nor poetical transmigrations, nor metamorphoses of gods ; their dull and grovelling minds have not even room for one such aspiration ; and their only belief in the supernatural is exhibited in an abject fear of some unseen, unfelt, and indescribable power of evil. With this feeling darkness is closely associated ; and the dull moaning of the wind, or an unusual murmuring of the distant waters, are signs and tokens of the approach of this ever-haunting demon of their apprehension.

They have no marriage ceremonial, and the proprietorship of wives, or " gins," is generally maintained by force of arms ; quarrels upon this subject being among their chief causes of war. Little or no real affection appears to exist amongst them, and social laws are evidently to a great extent dispensed with. When by accident, infirmity, or extreme old age, any of a tribe become helpless or troublesome, the rest move off and leave the wretched object to linger and die. I have been told of cases of the hastening of such deaths, but do not think it true. It would, however, be in reality a far more charitable way of treating their infirm and old, than the practice of leaving them, as I have seen them do, to perish lingeringly in their decay. They invariably conceal or bury their dead—a hollow tree is most frequently their simple mausoleum.

In some instances Cannibalism has distinctly been proved to exist amongst them. I have myself, among the rubbish of a black " gin's " net, found portions of human limbs and joints, in various stages of decomposition ; and on one occasion, upon a sudden encounter with a strange tribe, I found

the thigh of a child broiling upon the embers, in conjunction with opossum, snake, &c., evidently destined for the evening meal, which in their hasty flight they had deserted; but to their credit it must be recorded by all who know them, that this is very rarely a crime and degradation with which they are justly chargeable, in spite of their natural ferocity, their utter indifference for others' sufferings, and what, in their scant and precarious mode of living, might almost be deemed the many inducements to this atrocity.

It would, perhaps be straining comparison too far, in the case of such a decidedly inferior race, to offer any illustration from the testimony of ancient writers, respecting the relative condition of almost all uncivilized races. It may, perhaps, be sufficient, however, in connection with this subject, to direct attention to the brief account given by Cæsar, in the sixth book of his Commentaries, as to the rude state of manners and the barbarous customs of the ancient northern inhabitants of Europe,—the Germans, Huns, Alans, and other less-distinguished nations,—to shew, that in all ages, even in a comparatively advanced state of civilization, the lowest depth of sensual degradation has invariably prevailed. Dr. Robertson, in treating of a subject somewhat similar, namely, the Aboriginal Americans, deduces comparisons which upon careful investigation exhibit a surprising correspondence of manners and customs with the older nations above alluded to; but, unhappily, degeneration rather than amelioration, is the characteristic of the Australian Aborigine. The reverse of former invasions has been accomplished here; an inundation of light and intelligence, surpassing that which struggled against Gothic

rudenses and licentiousness, has taken place ; and the effect upon the primitive inhabitants has been in the one instance no less important than in the other; but, unfortunately, there have been here no contemporaneous writers, no Cæsar nor Tacitus has visited these shores, to throw the light of his genius upon the rude and barren history of Australia—future enquirers must therefore grope their way through the chaotic obscurity of its mere inferential records.

Nothing connected with the Aborigines is more remarkable than their dialect, and no particular is, perhaps, more diversely considered, nor, I think, less clearly understood. Various ingenious theories are broached to account for the startling variety which in this respect exists. A few facts well considered in connection with this subject, may help to a more reasonable conclusion than a thousand vague conjectures.

The circumstance that they name their children after some familiar object by which they are surrounded, (some particular fruit, tree, flower, shrub, or animal,) and that the names of parents change with the birth of every child, are peculiarities which must necessarily, even among their own tribes, cause an immense deal of confusion; but the fact that from the moment any among the tribe dies his name is never again mentioned, and that the name of the tree, fruit, flower, shrub, or animal, whence his name had been derived, is from that moment, among that particular tribe, changed, is curiously important. Hence, in some measure, may be traced the immense diversity in the accounts which have hitherto appeared respecting the language, and the extraordinary difficulty of acquiring anything more than the

most superficial knowledge of it. It is constantly changing among each tribe, and from the circumstance just mentioned, it must be obvious that in a very few years the names of almost everything around them, (and which indeed form the bulk of their language,) must be so altered, that two tribes which had spoken the same dialect may during an absence of a year or two, have so altered the names of everything about them, as to be, when they meet, almost unintelligible to each other; thus the very groundwork of language, (their nouns,) is destroyed. For instance, take an individual from each of two or three tribes, the name of one shall be EUROZA, synonymous with Sun, another KOORALL, named after a fish; of the third, BUTCHIN, signifying Spear. Now, on the death of either of these people, the name by which he was distinguished is never again heard, and the respective word signifying Sun, Fish, or Spear, is as widely changed as possible; and a traveller who had lately learned their designation of these particular objects, may thus in a few months be astonished at finding that no such words exist in their vocabulary; that they can never be induced to utter them, and that to all appearance they have no recollection of such sounds: and bearing in mind the geometrical progression of this change, when extended to thousands, it will not be difficult to understand the complexity of the subject.

This should lead persens to be very chary of offering anything like dictatorial opinions as to the language of these Natives, and induce, perhaps, a more charitable feeling than is usually exhited among gentlemen who think the subject worth investigating, but who, of course, are invariably met at every stage of their examination with obstacles and

contradictions like these. I think, however, that this apparently insignificant circumstance goes far towards shaking many of these elaborate theories, as to the various origins of the numerous tribes scattered throughout the Interior. Without presuming to state that it is so, I venture to assert that it is quite possible that the whole race are identical: there is nothing, I feel assured, in the diversity of their language that can be offered to the contrary; for it is remarkable that the greatest diversity exists between tribes most closely approximating; and it may be also observed, that in spite of the mutual changes constantly going on, a sufficient analogy exists, especially among the dialects of the most distant tribes, to evidence the probability of their common origin. Their character or disposition is perhaps the last item in this consideration.

Among the many peculiarities of those with whom I have chanced to meet, a treacherous cunning and a total absence of what is called feeling for others, an utter want of discrimination in the savage cruelties they perpetrate, are perhaps the most remarkable of their characteristics; they completely lack that sort of savage nobleness, and sensitive intelligence, so eminent in the North American Indian, or the New Zealander; and indeed they have not even enough of instinctive comprehension, (possessed generally by inferior animals,) to be awed by or to admire the cool and collected courage of a superior adversary. A rush of foolhardy daring, or even the blustering noise of a well-armed coward, scatter them like birds; but the intrepid daring of a mind unknown to fear, the coolness that can meet an unexpected danger, and calmly and deliberately defy it, has

with them no effect; they have not even the noble brute's appreciation of a still nobler power than their own, and in the successful accident which brings into their remorseless hands a few unarmed, powerless (perhaps starving,) men, all sense of feeling, all power of observation, all thought of anything but savage and immediate butchery, is apparently swallowed up; and inciting each other by hideous yells, and drowning their own vile fears in clamorous excitement, they rush madly on to do the murderous deed, which no motive on earth can justify, and for which they have no possible object other than that implanted in their treacherous and brutalized instincts. Their victim probably is a stran ger, harmless, innocent of injury to them or theirs, or even bent, perhaps, on seeking to do them service; and he is battered to atoms with their clubs, or mangled with their spears. Thus many a noble-hearted fellow has perished, and perished unheeded by the law, uncared for by the hand of power, but not all unavenged; for in that ever-urging might of right, which swells the veins of injured Englishmen, the odious shield set up by unjust law to screen the murderer from his doom, has failed, and retribution has fallen with tenfold force upon the heads of those thus sacrificed to the imprudence of an indiscriminate attempt at philanthropical protection. It would be a fearful power, I own, to trust the unreserved infliction of punishment into injured hands, but how infinitely more terrible is the vengeful spirit that burns to crush the arbitrary attempt of power to shield the injurer, and expose the victim to the consequences of further and increasing depredation. Revenge is not only fostered, but embittered by interference such as this, no

matter what may be the merit of the cause; and when that interference is not only unjust, but manifestly futile, it needs but little consideration to perceive how serious must be the consequences to all concerned, particularly to those on whose behalf the evident injustice has been urged.

The most sincere well wisher for these unfortunate people —and I include myself among the number, for I have striven through years, and often at the peril of my life, for the amelioration of their condition—can find no greater subject of regret or select a more fertile source of evil to their cause, than the feeling exhibited so warmly by a late Governor of the Colony in favour of their indiscriminate protection; a feeling, I fear, still too much affected, and attempted to be enforced, but all in vain; the law and the executive, though powerful to punish and redress, are powerless to perpetuate injustice; a higher tribunal, based on nature, throned in the human heart, sways their influence, and tramples upon their presumptuous authority.

The actual position in which the Squatter of the so-called unsettled districts stands towards the Aborigiual tribes, (of course I allude to wild and unsubdued Savages,) is one of undoubted hostility; in plain terms, it is a position of open warfare; and without presuming to enter into the question of right, by which the British Government or any superior power assumes the privilege of taking possession of and inhabiting the wasting territories of such savage tribes; it is surely to be inferred, that the mere assumption of this authority conveys to the subjects of that Government an indisputable right to protection—at any rate, the right of self-protection is inherent in our natural as well as civil con-

stitution, and the circumstances in which these Squatters exist are undeniably such as justify, nay, imperatively demand, the exercise of this indefensible prerogative.

Surrounded by numerous tribes of hostile savages, who are bent manifestly and determinedly upon the destruction of life or property whenever opportunity offers, what other course is open to persons so circumstanced? The very nature of our pastoral pursuits is evidently in this respect unfavourable to the Grazier and his servant, and affords at the same time immense facilities for the depredations of their lurking foes. The unfortunate Shepherd, in his solitary rambles through the verdant wilds, in inoffensive attendance on his fleecy flocks, is wholly in their power. It is true he is sometimes armed, but generally with some trumpery weapon, of the use of which he is unfortunately endowed with such little skill, that the actual amount of danger is pretty equally divided between the possession of the gun and the object against which it is attempted to be used. But looking at the matter in a broader view, of what avail would be one man, armed ever so efficiently, against either the fierce and open, or the secret and insidious attacks of combined hundreds of wily savages? Instances are, it is true, on record, of men so circumstanced, by mere force of cool and deliberate courage, and aided by almost miraculous good fortune, escaping with their lives; one instance I know of, where a brave old man, a native of Scotland, for three successive hours beat off single-handed a tribe of two hundred Blacks, and gallantly succeeded in rescuing his flock and bringing them safe home, although closely followed and incessantly attacked by these tremendous odds for a dis-

tance of nearly two miles. The gallant and devoted old fellow, when observed by his comrades at the station, and rescued by them from his perilous position, had no less than seven severe spear wounds in his body; four of which fearful weapons were then sticking into him, and one protruding completely through him.*

Other instances of a similar occurrence are recorded, but they still bear no proportion to the numbers of unfortunates who yearly sink beneath such murderous assaults, the innocent victims of savage barbarity. Now I trust it will be obvious, that such a position as this is one demanding the free exercise of self-defence; that in the total absence of any possibility of inflicting by legal process the punishment due to such offences, the privilege of summary retribution is necessary; nay further, that the rights of war, under the worst of the evils of which the parties so circumstanced are labouring, entitle them to protect themselves by driving from their doors the foe that lurks there only to destroy. I deem it manifestly unjust that actual murder must be permitted to be perpetrated before sufficient measures are allowed to be adopted for the removal of the danger. The evident intention to ravage and destroy is the natural signal for protective action. But it seems not. We must wait till we are attacked, remain quiescent until the murderer stalks at our door, and his victims quiver

* I feel proud to be able to bear testimony here to the liberal gratitude of the Employer of this exemplary servant, whose incessant attention to his deplorable condition was happily rewarded by success, and the old man, now a pensioner for life, and again hale and hearty, still reaps in easy competence, and in exemption from the necessity for toil, the fruits of his faithful service.

at our feet, and then a warrant may be obtained from the nearest neighbouring justice of the peace; and armed with which precious document, and in the name of Her most distant Majesty the Queen, (for whose injunctions, of course, the wild Blacks of Australia must be supposed to entertain the highest reverence,) we are permitted to call upon the offender to surrender himself to justice. As if it were possible to distinguish the particular murderer, although the deed was openly done before your eyes, among a tribe of equally hideous, naked, and bedaubed savages. As well might you look among that figurative collection of torments—a bag of fleas—for the particular insect which had especially troubled your night's repose, as attempt thus to distinguish. Besides, the law, as well as common sense, announces, that all who are banded together in the prosecution of an illegal act, are equally liable for the result of that illegal combination; and the blood shed by the hand of one is equally upon the heads of all. The manifest absurdity of a warrant at all in such cases needs no comment, and the fearful results to those for the protection of whom this interference has been established, justifies me in stating, that a more ill-judged policy was never concerted, a more destructive engine never by human ingenuity devised.

To those who are unacquainted with the depth of degradation to which these wretched creatures are reduced, who have not seen them in their true character, and felt the hopelessness of their position, it may perhaps seem harsh to affirm, that kindness and conciliation are entirely thrown

away upon them, but such, without a strong admixture of firm and impressive severity, is unhappily too true.

Latterly an important experiment has been tried, that of forming them into a Corps of Police, for the protection of the Squatter in the frontier, or unsettled districts, against the depredations of their more savage brethren; and it would appear from reports of their conduct that whatever may be the utility of this employment, the restraints of military discipline are well suited to their characters, and for the first time in their lives they seem not unwilling to submit themselves to the trammels of order and regularity. This, I must confess, is better than I ever expected from them, and it is also a greater moral regeneration than I ever thought could result from anything pertaining to matters military.

A deeper and more elaborate investigation (if it could be obtained,) might perhaps still further shew the fallacy of judging too hastily from the necessarily limited experience which has yet been acquired concerning these most inartificial people. But I very much doubt the practicability of ever thoroughly understanding them, and am firmly of opinion, that the estimate which a few years' residence and observation among them gives, cannot be upon the whole very far from correct. It is essential in all enquiries like these that the objects of investigation should be regarded precisely as you would regard *any* being whose characteristics you were anxious to appreciate or define: and nothing is so common in our observations of mankind, whether black or white, refined or barbarous, as regards each person mainly under the peculiar trait of character which seems

uppermost, or to which his peculiar manners or habits appear to give the greatest prominence; and as a general rule, the deductions which are made from such superficial analyses are not very erroneous. Few men are ever much more than they seem to be, still fewer are the opposite of character to that which they exhibit in their ordinary manifestations. Sidney Smith's definition of an extraordinary man is an admirable illustration of the exception to this rule; he says; "An extraordinary man is eight men, not one man; he has as much wit as if he had no sense, and as much sense as if he had no wit: his conduct is as judicious as if he were the dullest of mortals, and his genius is as brilliant as if he were irretrievably ruined."

Ordinary mortals possess no such opposites of character as these; theirs is a oneness of power that knows no versatility, and under limited generalities of observation, we may reasonably hope to form our estimates aright, from that which is commonly regarded as the superficiality of manners, but which is really after all the outward and visible sign of the divinity that stirs within. And thus I am induced to flatter myself that I have not erred egregiously in estimating so lowly the degraded beings whose characters, habits, and customs, have been now reviewed. The experiences to which I have alluded, and from which these general conclusions have been deduced, will be found in detail scattered through the pages of the several Sketches of Life and Adventures, of which this volume is composed.

No. 7.— SPORTS OF THE SOUTH.

To the Sportsman, in the Bush of Australia, there is much in its solitary scenes of wild and singular interest, which requires but little aid from the imagination to render extremely fascinating. Of course by "Bush," I do not mean the suburbs of large towns, or those mere roadless spots of brush and scrub, where periodically pic-nic parties pause to dance and feed, and pent-up townsmen throw aside their numerous daily cares, to ruralize in semi-sylvan state. I mean by "Bush" those distant and secluded wastes, over which the eye may roam or the foot may tramp, without fear of meeting anything of human mould to mar the deep repose or desecrate the almost sacred solitude of nature.

In such wildernesses of earth, where, probably, no foot save yours has trod, the pic-nic to be enjoyed is on a scale extensive in an inverse ratio to the "*viaticum*" supplied, and at which your dog and gun, whilst they yield to you the ever-varying delights of sport, are the only but important substitutes for the well-lined hampers, which ordinarily distinguish the fashionable observances of these rustic fêtes.

It has been often stated that there is no such thing as sport in Australia; such an assertion is only true of the immediate neighbourhood of some of the oldest and most populous towns, or of portions of the long-settled and thoroughly-stocked pastoral districts. In other portions there is an endless variety to be obtained by those whose pursuits

and inclinations lead them to seek it—this any one who has experience of the Bush can testify. I have lived for years beyond the so-called "limits of location," and wandered month after month along its boundless hills and plains, relying solely upon the game its forests and waters could supply to the ministration of nature's most imperative demands. My horses, dogs, and gun, my only companions; a blanket and tin pot my only household furniture; the earth my bed; and the "spacious firmament on high," as Addison magniloquently entitles it, my only roof and shelter—the latter often, I must confess, a very cold and leaky one—and my own experience is, that in most of such fertile portions of the country a great abundance of game is to be met with.

I am anxious not to be misunderstood to assert, that we can produce here all kinds of sport, or that those we do possess are even to be compared with some of the most approved of England's sporting treats. Our native dogs are not Foxes, nor our Wild Bulls Bisons; neither are our Kangaroos Antelopes, nor our Wild Pigs veritable Boars: nevertheless, the pursuit of such, albeit unrecognized, game, affords exciting sport, and is not to be despised.

To the hybrid sportsman of the Cockney school, whose town-formed mind knows no idea of sport apart from crowded rings or noisy betting stands, such sports can hardly be inviting. To those of the legitimate *regime*, who do possess a taste for something else, I trust a few brief sketches of the Sports of the South may not come amiss, although the game referred to be of a less ennobling character or less tumultuously exciting than are those brilliant events in

which they are accustomed to participate. A dose of Hock and soda-water may, however, be constitutionally agreeable after an undue freedom of indulgence in potables more potent. Man, even of the sporting genus, cannot quite subsist alone on brandy and water, nor can he dispense entirely with those smaller dissipations, which in themselves, although comparatively insipid, are, after all, the real porridge to the salt, whose savour else would preponderate overpoweringly.

Not but that we do occasionally muster "brilliant events" upon the Turf, and get up valiant "meets," to chase the native *Dingo* in the neighbourhood of our chief towns. An Englishman imports his ardent love of hunting and horse-racing as naturally as he carries about with him any other of his numerous predilections and antipathies, and the result is, that various descriptions of hounds, and a very fine breed of horses, fleet, enduring, and symmetrical, from the choicest imported stock, are now commonly to be met with in Australia.

The distinguishing sport of the country, however, is Kangaroo-hunting, and in an open forest country, with a brace of good dogs, a magnificent sport it is. With an animal possessed of great speed, and armed with prodigious strength, the excitement of the chase acquires the added zest of a fierce and hazardous encounter between the hunters and the hunted, which unfortunately, however, too frequently results in the destruction or severe mutilation of those who lack experience of such matters.

From English engravings of Australian Kangaroo-Hunting, it appears to me that a most erroneous impression

is entertained as to the animal's style of running. Only a short time ago I saw an otherwise very good engraving of this description; but the Kangaroos are galloping along on all fours, with his tail cocked up over his back, like a paralytic squirrel—an evident mistake, for the Kangaroo runs or rather hops, in an upright posture, slightly inclined forwards when at full speed, his whole power of motion being in his hind legs and tail; with the latter of which he strikes the ground, and bounds to a surprising distance. I have measured the length of the leap of a Kangaroo at full speed and found it from twenty-five to thirty feet.

The hind legs of this curious animal are bent under it body, the whole of the lower part of the leg lying along the ground, so that in springing, these legs and tail are made to serve the same relative purpose as the hind and fore legs of a horse, only that the Kangaroo, from its peculiar formation is compelled to perform a sort of rocking motion, and to take more perpendicular leaps: nevertheless, for a short distance, his speed is greater even than that of the horse, and it requires a very good and well-trained hound to keep up with him. His fore feet, which are indeed mere claws, are only used when he assumes the horizontal position necessary to enable him to feed, and for the purpose of grappling with his antagonist when standing at bay. The Kangaroo appears a timid, inoffensive animal, but when baited for life is a dangerous creature to approach, and a blow from its tail, or a gash from the middle toe of one of its hind feet, is exceedingly unpleasant. If the Kangaroo can succeed in reaching deep water, it becomes a most difficult and dangerous attack for the dogs to attempt. I had once two out of three dogs

killed by one of the largest sort, known by the name of an "*Old Man*," who ran into the centre of a deep lagoon, after a ten minutes' bursting run across the edge of one of those hollow plains so common in many parts of the Interior.

When in about four feet of water, he turned and faced his canine enemies with a sort of intelligent consciousness of his superiority, which was in marked contrast with the stupid simplicity of the expression of his visage. With heedless courage the dogs assailed him, but it was in vain that they approached: the tremendous advantage which the Kangaroo enjoyed, from his height and peculiarity of structure,—which enabled him. of course, to stand at ease upon the bottom of the lagoon whilst the dogs were swimming—was very soon apparent. As each dog reached him, he immediately, with a stroke of his paw, sank it beneath the surface, occasionally as opportunity offered holding it down for several seconds at a time. The dogs behaved with desperate courage, attacking again and again with unrelenting fierceness, although baffled and beaten back, scratched, and half drowned at each encounter. At length, exhaustion grew upon them, and after one vigorous rally, two of them sank to rise no more alive, while the third—a young dog, which had not been so much injured in the skirmish, and which missing the encouragement of his comrades, thought it was high time to cry "hold, enough," turned tail upon his successful foe, and left him in the complacent possession of a bloody victory.

The "*Old Man*" then hopped quietly away, and was soon out of sight in the distant Bush. I have seen them killed in this way, but if the water is of a favourable depth,

and the bottom of the lagoon is of a nature to admit of his free movements, the chances are greatly against the dogs, which are very soon baffled by this unequal aquatic warfare.

The flesh of the thigh of the Kangaroo makes excellent steaks, and its tail is much approved in the manufacture of soup.

There is also a great variety of the Wallaby, or inferior Kangaroo tribe, which affords abundance of sport, and adds considerably to the indigenous edibles of the Bush. There are two principal kinds; viz. the Brush and the Rock Wallaby, both of which are very numerous. These animals are about half the size of the full-grown Kangaroo, and are more frequently shot than coursed, on account of their habits of haunting respectively the most thickly timbered and mountainous portions of the country—retreats from which it is next to impossible to drive them. In the Brushes you get black fellows to assist you, turning them into these natural preserves to work like gamekeepers and dogs in an English cover, conducting your operations for the "*battue*" in a precisely similar manner as is there arranged; and if actual slaughter affords any satisfaction, this may be regarded as a most delightful recreation, for in a very short time you may load a tribe of blacks with your bleeding spoils: but never having myself been partial to battue slaughtering, this is a sport in which I have not frequently indulged.

The Rock Wallaby must be sought, as its name indicates, among the rocky glens or mountain fastnesses, where shelter rather than luxuriant herbage is afforded. This is indeed a genuine sport, a manly and spirited recreation, to which I have always been particularly attached. The rug-

ged magnificence of the scenery through which you pursue your prey, the wildness and solitude of the silent glens and the stupendous majesty of the untrodden mountains, whose precipitous ledges afford the merest foothold for the nimble objects of your search, lend a keen relish to the charming sport, such as I have always found to harmonise with the feelings of my mind. The little dash of danger, too, from falling rocks and yawning chasms, detracts in no wise from its excitement, but rather imparts to it an additional zest. Other less romantic dangers, from the spears of the Blacks, occasionally, however, interfere with the quiet enjoyment of this pursuit. And there is some further danger from your own weapon, which can scarcely be avoided, occasioned frequently by the rebounding of your bullet from some of the surrounding rocks, from which latter hazardous casualty I on one occasion received a severe contusion on the heel,—the ball of my rifle having struck upon some slightly-inclined face of an opposite rock, and been projected thence in a backward direction over my head, so nearly approaching to me that I distinctly heard the whizz as it flew by; it then struck a projecting angle of the rocks behind me, from which it was again reverberated to its former course, terminating its flight,—spent, fortunately from the distance it had travelled—by giving me a small taste of that which I had intended for the lucky marsupial, which had of course now escaped, and was doubtless congratulating itself upon ts safety in some of the inaccessible retreats with which these rugged mountains abound. The flesh of the Wallaby, like that of the Kangaroo, is a very passable substitute for beef in the absence of the real thing, and is largely used by

the Aborigines, whose method of sneaking upon and spearing them is very ingenious and persevering. Of the still inferior animals belonging to this family, the Opossum, Bandicote, Paddymelon, Rabbit-rat, Kangaroo-rat, &c., may be enumerated as contributing largely to the maintenance of the Natives, and as affording much moonlight amusement to the lovers of the gun. On a clear moonlit night, in this agreeable climate, there are, perhaps, few more captivating sports than that which this peculiar kind of shooting offers; and for which the scant but graceful foliage of the majority of the Australian forest trees is particularly favourable. I have elsewhere described the peculiar method pursued by the Aborigines in hunting the principal of these unfortunate animals.

Native Dog-hunting is, in fact, neither more nor less than the Fox-hunting of the Antipodes; and there is much similarity in the sport, particularly when "fashionably" hunted, as by the Fitzroy foxhounds, where all the paraphernalia of a regular red-coat "meet" are complied with. The common mode of the country, however, is to course them with Kangaroo dogs, which usually makes but short work of the matter: but even this is a sport keenly enjoyed, particularly when well mounted, and with a good brace of dogs, you happen to fall across one in an open piece of country; and the chase lacks nothing of its relish, in the mind of the Settler, through the advantage derived by him from the destruction of this ravenous and dangerous animal.

Emu-hunting is a sport now rarely enjoyed except at the extreme frontiers of the settled districts. The Emu is a very dangerous bird for dogs to attack; its kick is almost

certainly fatal to them, and it behoves a horseman to be well upo hisn guard when he approaches one; instances having occurred where such a want of care has been the means of sacrificing the lives of valuable horses, which have been ripped completely open by a blow from the formidable toe of this powerful bird. The Emu is most commonly hunted without dogs; a fair stand-up race between horse and bird constituting the chief pleasure of this sport. This curious creature, like the Ostrich, the Cassowary, the Penquin, or the Apteryx, has a remarkably small development of wings, and depends entirely upon its legs for locomotion, if the slight flapping motion which it sometimes makes with its plumeless wings, when running, is excepted; and it requires a really sound good horse to compete with its tremendous speed. The thong of the hunter's stockwhip, laid abont the region of the neck, seems either to kill or catch this species of game; but the latter is a very tickleish operation, for the Emu seems to be by no means destitute of bravery, and is often therefore during the process of catching and taming, extremely mischievous and troublesome. The sport, however, is so similar to Ostrich-hunting, which has frequently been well described, that I refrain from sayiug more concerning it than that it has long enjoyed a high reputation among the recreations of the Colony, from its affording one of the best tests that can be selected of the speed and endurance of your horse.

Wild Cattle Shooting, of which there is always an abundance to be obtained, is now not much practised, except by a few adventurous youths, and even these soon tire of a sport which is attended with much more danger than is com-

pensated for by either the pleasure or the excitement which it affords.

Where the cattle are thoroughly wild,—which of course they are in such neighhourhood as you presume to shoot them—the usual way of enjoying the sport is to proceed with a party of two or three on foot towards some of the grassy and thinly-timbered slopes that usually skirt or fringe the plains and valley flats; here, in secluded spots, large herds of wild cattle are to be met with, moving down, as the heat of the day increases, towards some favourite pool or stream. Upon the approach of the sportsmen, their general movement is an abortive attempt at retreat. They snort, tear up the ground, gallop about in circles, and manifest decided symptoms of uneasiness, but seldom either actually attack or fly. During this state of affairs you are gradually enabled to approach some of them, by creeping onwards under the cover of such of the trees as you can succeed in getting into a right line between you and the particular object of your attack. You then (if you belong to the cautious school,) mount some accessible tree, and seeing that your friends are ensconced in similar safety, let fly at the first beast whose curiosity gets sufficient mastery of his prudence to induce his near enough approach. Now then a terrible commotion ensues, especially on the part of the wounded animal, around which, with heads and tails erect, and full of blatant wrath, the whole herd plunge and dance in most admired disorder.

At this juncture a few well-planted shots are calculated to tell with great effect; and if your metal is heavy enough, and your range not too distant, a goodly supply of the

toughest sort of beef you ever tasted is pretty certain to reward your labours. However, the pleasure of the sport does not always repay you for its risk, particularly if you are not securely perched out of harm's way; and it of course sometimes happens, that in the spot where you surprise the herd, no such shelter may be available, and then a little disagreeable dodging takes place, with possibly a somerset in the air, assisted by the horns of some infuriated bull, or very probably a knock down and a most unpleasant trampling upon by some stray detachment of the herd, whose wrath you have reason to believe is totally blind.

I must candidly confess that my zest for this sport was materially checked by a very severe contusion which I received on my first introduction to its arcana, from the head of what my companions decidedly called a good-sized calf. My own impression to this day is, that it was a Poley Cow, or well-grown Steer; however, the effect at the time was all the same, for whatever it was, it charged me full tilt—head down and tail up, in the most approved style of procedure—and before I had time even to think of moving I found myself ricocheting over the back of the beast in a manner not by any means agreeable: and then, not to mention the bruises which I received on suddenly regaining "*terra firma*," with a thump which I thought must have dislocated every bone in my body, to be unmercifully laughed at by my companions, (who, of course, had taken care of themselves, and come off scathless,) because I had been knocked down by a mere calf. From that day, although I have frequently joined in the sport, I have never heartily

enjoyed it; there was always a disagreeable association of ideas about it; in fact, I never could forget—as a horrid bore of a friend of mine, who sets up for a wit in a small way, takes care to be incessantly reminding me—that at the outset of my cattle-shooting experience, I was most effectually *cowed by a calf!*

Wild-horse hunting, of which in several districts a very fair supply may be had for those who like it, is a sport much more congenial to my taste, albeit no less attendant with peril than that of Cattle-stalking; but is, I think, one infinitely superior in pleasure and excitement. There is something, too, more noble in the animal you hunt, while the object of the sport is useful, instead of being, as is too frequently the case with sport in general, adopted merely for destruction.

Of course in this pursuit your object is, not to destroy, but to catch, for after uses, the noble creature which ranks so high among the many important ministers to man's comfort and convenience, provided for us in the animal creation; but as a general rule, I am convinced that this same catching process is a thoroughly unprofitable one, for frequently as many horses are killed or spoiled in the chase as are obtained for the trouble of running them in. Yet, joining the hunt only as a sport, this is a really delightful and most exciting employment. These horses, it will of course be understood, are the long-lost and neglected offspring of imported stock (chiefly of Valparaiso breed,) and which, after years of neglect, have multiplied prodigiously and become quite wild. They degenerated considerably,

as is usual with wild stock, but make very serviceable hackneys when tamed and broken.

The process of catching them is simple; the object being to run in, from the mountainous regions which they frequent, to some adjacent stock-yard, as many of the troop as you can succeed in cutting off from the rest of their companions, and driving in from their mountain fastnesses. This of course can only be accomplished by careful management and long and severe riding. It is often found necessary, where the country is particularly broken and adverse to your operations, to construct temporary yards into which to run them; this plan, although often successful, is attended with so much expense and loss of time, that it is rarely profitable, even when the number of horses to be obtained by these means is very considerable.

Generally a party of six or eight well-mounted men are employed on this service, and scouring the neighbourhood of their reputed haunts in parties of twos or threes until the troop is sighted, each party alternately takes up the chase, maintaining by this means one incessant gallop, until their fatigue enables you to turn and drive them in the required direction. It is a common but injurious practice after discovering them, to wait until the heat of the day induces them to drink, and then, when their stomachs are thus distended, to pounce upon them, the more effectually and quickly to enable you to fatigue and turn them. This scheme, however, leads to the destruction of great numbers, for in this state they often run until they drop dead; and I have myself seen them run until they are quite blind, when

they either fall a useless prey into the clutches of the hunter, or dash themselves to pieces in their phrenzied efforts for liberty.]

Among the dangers attendant upon this violent sport, the dreadfully mountainous country in which you mostly have to follow it is not to be disregarded; and surely nothing short of a series of miracles can account for the many narrow escapes from dangers in which you seem to be perpetually involved. Unlike eattle, horses invariably fly at your approach, and when turned in their wild career, and baffled and foiled in every effort to outstrip their determined pursuers, and to break from the ever-ready circle of enemies who surround and at every alternate point and opportunity oppose them, a sort of terrible determination to escape seems suddenly to inspire them. I have seen them simultáneously pause in their baffled flight, and shriek with rage at their discomfiture; but when this moment of suspense is past, and fierce determination kindles in their every eye, then is the time to keep well on your guard, for onward they rush with heedless undeviating impetuosity, trampling down all before them with a force which is fearful to contemplate. To arrest their progress when thus driven to desperation is impossible, and it is well if you perceive the state of things in time to get out of their way, for thus have many men and horses been killed, or frequently so mutilated beneath the hoofs of the infuriated animals, as to maim and cripple them for life.

> "Away, away, onwards they dash,
> Torrents less rapid, and less rash."

This is, of course, the grand excitement of the chase: and here it is that superior horsemanship, daring, and deeply calculating skill, are to be manifested. Much, also now depends upon the speed and bottom of your horse. Away like the wind they fly, over hill and dale; now bounding up a steep and rocky ridge, now dashing madly down a rough precipitous slope, which brings your heart into your mouth each stride you take, if you are bold enough to follow, and which, unless you determine to give up the chase at once, you have no alternative but to do. A very short time, however, now decides the probabilities of success; the pace is too severe to be long continued, and of course if you can only tire them out so as to succeed in again turning and heading them towards the plains, the day is yours, and but little more trouble is required to drive them to the stock-yard: but failing this success,—which is not at all unfrequent,—the maddened creatures hold on their desperate course until the shelter of the almost impenetrable forests and the mountains of the dividing ranges is attained, and they are again free and untrammelled in their safe and unapproachable wilds.—

"A thousand horse! the wild, the free!"

While upon the subject of imported animals, run wild, I may as well mention, that some of the Coast Scrubs are infested with large numbers of Wild Pigs, which afford capital occupation for the gun, and help, moreover, advantageously "to keep the pot a-boiling." Some of the wild hogs grow to an enormous size, and are anything but safe or agreeable animals to meet with when they are hungry.

I remember on the Clarence surprising a huge monster that had just gored to death a poor old man, and had actually half eaten him, whilst his body was yet warm and quivering. The fierce and ravenous beast turned savagely upon me as I approached, but luckily I had my gun, and accordingly I promptly administered a dose of buck shot under his shoulder, which brought him to the ground. He instantly, however, recovered his feet, and foaming with wrath, again advanced to attack me. A second discharge arrested him in his career, and enabled me to reload with ball, by which I speedily despatched him. This kind of episode, however, when you are only prepared for a little harmless porker-shooting, detracts considerably from the enjoyment of this sport.

I shall detail but one other description of sport which this country yields, and for this purpose select the Bustard, which is, of all the varieties of game in the Interior,—although much sought for, on account of the delicate and substantial repast it affords,—one of the most difficult birds to shoot. To quote from high authority, 'The Bustard, or Wild Turkey, is a capital fellow, and an excellent dish;" to which startling and important information I beg to add, that the Bustard varies very much in size, often weighing from eighteen to twenty pounds ; and although somewhat similar in appearance and flavour, it is generally a much larger bird than the domesticated fowl, from which it derives its common alias of Turkey.

Formerly, when the Aborigine was their only enemy, they appear to have been as little shy as any other bird ; but whether they have been specially endowed with a keen

susceptibility of their own fine flavour, or are,—as the high authority already quoted would express it,—conscious that "they are a capital dish," or whether they are instinctively a sage and apprehensive race, I know not; the fact, however, is indisputable, that a more difficult bird to get at can scarcely be found in the most extensive sporting experience.

In unfrequented parts of the country, this remarkable shyness is not so manifest; even after having been shot at on foot, you may often succeed in getting at them on horseback. This plan, however, holds good but twice or thrice, and where they have been frequently sought, as in a tolerably well-settled district, it requires all a genuine sportsman's art and persevering ingenuity to get a chance at one. I have at different times succeeded in shooting many by the various schemes I have adopted. Towards the end of one season, in particular, I remember there were only five left in my immediate neighbourhood; these took up their quarters upon a large adjoining plain; where they went at night Heaven only knows,—but there, from daylight until dark, they resolutely stuck,—and the moment any person appeared in sight, even at the distance of a mile, they at once commenced defensive operations, stalking majestically, (with their huge white "bands" fluttering in the breeze) in careful curves to the centre of this chosen spot of safety. Surrounding or driving them was quite out of the question: upon a plain so large as the one to which I allude, a regiment of soldiers would have proved inadequate to the task. Stratagem alone remained. The long range of the rifle had

long before afforded them sufficient instruction as to the nearest possible approach of the enemy compatible with their safety. The deception of the horse was palpably familiar to their defensive tactics; whilst the nature of their open position, their keen sense of smell, and the height at which they carry their heads, (sometimes four or five feet,) rendered the laborious representation of a snake in the grass, even after a mile or two's tedious crawling, a frequently ineffectual and always unpleasant contrivance.

I had astonished them once or twice, also, by driving up to them in a gig; but this, like every other such surprise, was not to be successfully repeated. Carefully driving a few quiet milkers from the dairy herd slowly before me, and letting them partially feed as they approached the enemy's camp, I had found at times very successful; but even this at last failed, and I was then driven to my wit's end to conceive another project to deceive them. Everything appeared to fail; at length I bethought me of the black fellow's "artful dodge," of sheltering his approach by carrying boughs of trees before him as he sneaks upon his game, and I determined to improve if possible upon this hint from nature. With this view I constructed, by hoops, and sticks, and leafy boughs twisted together, a sort of portable arbour, into which I ensconced myself, very much after the well-known fashion of "Jack in the Green" of May-day memory, and gun in hand, advanced upon the game.

I remember well how often I was very nearly spoiling every chance of success by an irresistible impulse to laugh

each time I pictured to myself the ludicrous appearance I must have presented had any one been near to watch me The birds, too, as I approached, looked so ridiculously amazed, and strutted staringly about with a half-suppressed "gobble, gobble, gobble," evidently endeavouring to gather each other's opinion concerning this marvellous phenomenon, and restraining themselves only by an apparent point of honour from at once taking the sense of the meeting upon the prudence of an immediate flight. They were literally frighted out of their propriety,—a Burnham wood had come to Dunsinane—and they were fairly nonplussed. My excitement as I came within gunshot had, however, sufficient influence to check any undue or boisterous appreciation of this comical scene; and feeling that now my very last chance at this wary *quintette* had actually arrived, I withheld my fire until well within distance of them, when, finding that any closer range was highly problematical, judging from the receding movements and the troubled physiognomies of the bewildered birds; I therefore rested the base of my arbourous tenement on the ground, projected my double-barrel through an aperture in front, and taking deliberate aim, let fly at the heads of the first two that came within the line of fire, dashed down my house of boughs, and was just in time with my reserve barrel to arrest the flight of the second bird, which, it appeared, I had at the first shot only slightly wounded.

The two Bustards thus obtained weighed respectively twenty-two and seventeen pounds, and they were the last of the tribe I was ever able to obtain; for although the

other three in the course of a week returned to the protection of this plain, they retained a very judicious apprehension of green boughs, and no ingenuity of mine was ever sufficient to practice further upon their credulity. And there, in all the self-important majesty of conquerors, until the season of their departure to more genial climes, this sapient *trio* stalked, the bane of all my sporting friends, (and very nearly the death of one,) whose frequent and ingenious efforts were in this particular doomed to go unrewarded.

The nearly sacrificed friend to whom I have specially alluded, was a very young gentleman, whose natural taste for masquerading led him to insist on dressing himself up for an attack on these devoted birds, in an Emu's skin, prompted no doubt to this particular costume by the remarkable adaptation of his legs for carrying out a perfect representation of this character. The result was unpleasant in the extreme. He had no sooner started on his adventure than the dogs were upon him,(imprudently turned out, I fear, for the purpose). Running away was, of course, in his awkward predicament, the very worst thing to attempt, but so frightened was the poor fellow, that away he went as hard as he could run, (the most awkward representation of an Emu that ever I saw); fortunately, however, he kept his gun under his wing, for in a little more than a moment the dogs were up with him; he turned, screaming with excess of terror, and swung his gun about with frantic energy to keep them off. Alarmed for his safety, we ran to his assistance, and but for the imminent danger he was

in, I think a more comical scene could hardly have been enjoyed. The dogs seemed somehow to have found out that he was not exactly a bird; they were, nevertheless, very desirous of considering him "*game*" of some sort, and of worrying him accordingly. As we approached we could see the poor fellow, sometimes reeling about and struggling with two dogs hanging on to him, sometimes they were all rolling over and over indiscriminately;—sometimes he was striking out lustily with the butt of his gun, and was always (whatever else might be going on,) screaming murder with an intense conviction of its reality, which was quite touching. When we arrived to his aid, and had beaten off his canine enemies, he was so unlike a bird, that really none but an insane pair of dogs could have gone on supposing him one. He was also very unlike a man, so much so, that the doctor who came to see him felt called upon to remark, among other professional slang, that he didn't think his mother would know him if she saw him. Luckily, however, the injuries were superficial, and be soon recovered, but the Bustards for that season remained thenceforward unharmed and unmolested.

Most of the other Sports of the Colony are so similar to those of England, that it would be superfluous to enumerate them here. Snipe, Duck, Quail, &c., are shot pretty much in the same manner all over the world; and as to Fishing, there is little or no peculiarity worth mentioning respecting the "gentle sport." The Cod grows to a prodigious size in some of our western waters, (sometimes seventy or eighty pounds in weight,) which makes a sub-

stantial addition to the larder. The Herring in our eastern streams stands in lieu of Trout for Fly-fishing; and the bays and harbours of our extensive line of coast afford incessant fishing amusement to the piscatorial tribe, in every variety, from a Shark to a Shrimp, or even, occasionally, from a Whale to a Periwinkle.

No. 8.— COLONIAL SOCIETY.

THE subject of Colonial Society is one into the details of which I do not propoee entering in the present Sketches. A field so novel and extensive could hardly be fairly opened in the pages of a desultory Sketch-book; such a subject, moreover, would seem to require the connected interest of a tale or novel, the varying incidents of which might be introduced to facilitate the exhibition of character more plainly and intelligibly than could otherwise be obtained from the best pen-and-ink illustrations.

I select, however, from that mingled mass of ever-variable humanity, SOCIETY, a specimen description of the two opposite classes of Colonial people, whose peculiar characteristics may almost be considered as the result of accidental circumstances, rather than as belonging to any natural dispensation; I allude respectively to "New Chums" and "Old Hands;" each class in itself a motley, heterogeneous race, but possessing, nevertheless, sufficient distinctiveness of character to mark, beyond the possibility of doubt, the well-known stereotyped essentials of the order to which they belong.

One of the most remarkable creatures in the whole circle of Colonial society, is that unhappy nondescript 'ycleped— for want of language more appropriately expressive—a "New Chum."

With a lugubrious helplessness, bordering on imbecility,

and a homebred consciousness of self-importance, far, very far beyond the pale of the supremely ludicrous, this singular specimen of the genus *homo*, is, to the Ethnologist of the Colonial world precisely what that curiously-amphibious animal, which cannot live on land, and dies immediately in water, is said to have been to the Hibernian naturalist of former days an object alike of general interest and speculation. Natural History, with its exhaustless stores of anatomistic wonder, can produce no living parallel to this asthenic giant. The New Chum is, in fact, a living specimen of the folly of all human speculations; he is actually an embodied *non sequitur*; he follows contrariety in every aspect of his dubious affairs; shadows vacuity forth at every turn of thought, and whilst one atom of his curious freshness yet remains, he is a true epitome of paradoxes, the veritable Gordius of the modern Antipodes.

Not but that there are differences as wide and palpably distinct among New Chums as there are in any other phase of human society. I have a vivid recollection of those verdant days, when personally belonging to that curious class, and the thought of many of the hard practical jokes by which "Old Hands" are prone to exemplify their eminent sagacity, even now comes over me like a dismal dream.

There are many individuals, of course, who always can with reason console themselves by the reflection, that they suffer somewhat for the sins of their Cockney brethren, and who may confidently refer to subsequent experience for confirmation of such self-laudatory conclusions.

Accustomed by previous habits of life to rural pursuits, fond of and practised in the sports of the field, many new

comers there are who necessarily perform but a brief probation in the Bush here, for they (unlike the "New Chum" of town-bred habits,) have not to recommence their life anew. The one casts himself, with the unconscious helplessness of a babe, into the midst of scenes and occupations, of the nature of which he is profoundly ignorant; the other needs but the addition of local experience to his pre-formed habits of life to exempt him from those retributive pains and penalties which follow from the ridiculous follies, vices, and conceits, of genuine and unmitigated New Chumism.

In the congenial neighbourhood of towns, this species of New Chum is simply offensive, the pert consequence of his folly is there unredeemed even by the smallest trait of humour; there the whimsical perversity of his genius is sadly cramped, whilst in his transition state,—in the country where everything is obviously new, and to his bewildered faculties wondrous strange,—his energies expand, he obtains a wider field for action, and ampler opportunities for the display of his exquisitely ridiculous propensities to err. And thus it is that the wretched egotism, which in town distinguishes (with vain glorious insignificance,) this puny Titan, stands unfortunately exposed in all its natural ugliness.

What is more intolerable than the AW-AW style in which the New Chum (Urban,) treats you to his views of colonial society; bah! he heaves over the bare idea of such a thing. Can anything short of emetic tartar realise the sickening sensation produced by his flashy references to everything colonial, to "how-*aw we do such things at-aw-home.*"

Many a time and oft have I been absolutely ill at this unfledged biped's reminiscences of his friend Lord Doodle,

or of the Honourable Francis Blot, or his dear Lady Bray. The solemn reverence, too, with which he talks of St. Paul's, the doating ecstacies with which he mentions Piccadilly, is positively smothering. My heart sickens whenever I meet in town a town-bred ninny of this fecundite race. In the country, of course, you laugh at him: one can regard with a sort of pitying complacency a fish out of water—its very helplessness disarms disgust; but fancy a TITTLEBAT from Hampstead ponds removed to the deep waters of some noble river, turning up its tiny nose in self-sufficient Cockney consequence at the *new* and *outré* gambols of a rustic salmon, or the too violent gymnastics of a hungry pike, and the sight is barely tolerable—yet such is, in fact, a not very imperfect representative of what we see so often here, and which, when travestied into human affairs, is rendered atrociously disgusting by the sickening degradation of its much-too-applicable burlesque.

It is of this species I speak, in his Bush aspect, when attempting to illustrate the singularities of the genus, New Chum. He is emphatically an anomaly, at once credulous and incredulous,—his belief in things, of which he may have happened to possess some previous clue to an idea, is positively unbounded—his discredit, on the other hand, of whatever is entirely new to the benighted faculties which he has imported, or what may be in any way at variance with his diminutive preconceptions, is really most complete. In this respect he resembles the old gentlewoman who, when her errant grandson told her of sailing Nautilus' shells—of living and growing coral rocks—or of Flying Fish,—was most indignant at the presumptuous attempt to

foist such stupid nonsense on her better judgment; but who, when the indulgent youth discoursed of sailing over Red Seas, crimson as blood, and of fishing up therefrom sundry of ancient Pharaoh's chariot wheels, listened with attention and delight to her adventurous boy, her truth in these particulars being guaranteed by so many Scripture coincidences of which her untravelled mind had long ago taken cognizance. So it is with the New Chum; tell him of rushing streams of *stagnant* water—of bread trees basking in the glowing sun,—of innumerable wild beasts herded in inaccessible mountains,—and he sees it all; he has no doubt of your veracity. But talk to him of skeletons of whales a hundred miles inland, of salt lakes far away in the interior, of sea-shells five thousand feet above the level of the sea; of Megatherium remains scattered over the surface of our northern plains; of Mammoths in our western caves; or, indeed, of the existence of gold, rubies, sapphires, and diamonds, in our modern Ophir, until their abundance was so clearly demonstrated that doubt was utterly impossible, and he turns from you with ill-concealed disgust;—"*he knows better*," and you waste your information upon ears incredulous.

Nor is this obstinacy of belief limited to the more startling novelties that beset him in this new and singular country. The most minute detail of ordinary incidents serves him in his unfortunate habit of direct contrariness just as effectually.

I remember once upon a time starting upon a journey with a New Chum of very recent importation. We landed with our horses from the steamer in which we had left Sydney. Proceeding at once to accoutre his animal, pre-

paratory to a premeditated Bush excursion, it became apparent at a moment's glance that "the gent" was not by any means *au fait* at his task. The saddle itself was somewhat of a mystery to him, whilst the bridle evidently struck him as one of those ingeniously awkward contrivances with which our modern Goths delight to aggravate the uninitiated; but the saddle-bags! they were the *ne plûs ultra* of perplexity; they were really sorely puzzling to him. However, as he seemed to shun assistance, most of his fellow-passengers loitered about the spot, under the ostensible pretext of looking after their own stray luggage, but in reality to witness the *dénouement* of his singular dilemma. First, he tried on the saddle in a variety of novel positions, each having a pre-supposed reference, of course, to the future destination of the saddle-bags; these were then tried on in every conceivable direction but the right; first on the horse's neck, next on his tail, then under his belly, until, at last, under the influence of some temporary inspiration, he appeared finally to have settled them *under* the saddle. Amidst the hardly-suppressed titters of the lookers-on, a benevolent and highly-respectable old gentleman accosted him, and unobtrusively begged permission to set him right in the arrangement of his refractory equipment. He yielded awkwardly to this good-natured offer, and in a few moments the saddle-bags were comfortably placed in their proper position. Instead, however, when this was accomplished, of thanking his kindly-disposed friend for this timely aid, judge of our surprise at seeing him coolly and deliberately undo all that had been done, replace the bags with wonderful pointedness of action upon the horse's back,

girth on his saddle over them again, and then, turning with mock deference and respect to the bewildered old gentleman, who stood at his elbow gazing in mute amazement at these strange operations, he thrust forward his face with an expression of idiotic knowingness I shall never forget, put his finger to his left eye, pulled down the lower lid of that fish-like optic, to afford its ampler inspection, and enquired in solemn tones if his venerable friend "saw any *green* there?" then grinning like an insane monkey, he mounted his unfortunate horse, and, amidst the boisterous and unconcealed mirth of the surrounding spectators, proceeded on his way.

The comical mixture of conceit and doubt, of conscious knowingness and unconscious foolery, which that man's face presented, as he accomplished this feat, has left an indelible impression on my recollection, and I can scarcely refrain even now from laughing outright as I picture to myself all the ludicrous accompaniments of that ridiculous scene.

It was my singular luck to fall in with this accomplished youth on the following evening; he had lost his way, and was looking savagely hungry and correspondingly miserable.

It would appear that his destination had been a certain "Slab" house in the district, the fullest particulars of the road to which he had received in and brought with him straight from England; the adulteration of any local direction was of course out of the question, nothing but pure English, even to the matter of local information, was good enough for him. But as this simple soul,—incredible as it may appear,—had never heard or thought of any *slabs*

save those of marble, he had trotted gaily on, dreaming perchance that he "dwelt in marble halls," and hoping momentarily no doubt, to burst in sight of this splendid realisation of his most sanguine expectations. The consequence, as a matter of course, was, that he had wandered far away from the *stringy bark* slab hut, of which, in reality, he was then in search. In fact, he had seen and passed two or three times the identical habitation without deigning to call at such a rough-looking place, to even ask directions there. Recognising me at my approach, he brightened up; for my part, I felt slightly reluctant to the meeting, after having recently laughed at him so heartily; but fancy my astonishment, when with a smirk of self-applauding satisfaction, he enquired "how the old fellow had borne the laugh I raised against him yesterday?"—Verily I could hardly refrain from bolting straight, and leaving him to the unhappy contemplation of his fate. The thick-souled blockhead had evidently been chuckling over the successful "Rowland for an Oliver" which he supposed he had bestowed upon the friendly old gentleman, who vainly thought to have rendered him a trifling but well-timed service.

I was somewhat repaid, however, for my forbearance by the comical look of horror and disgust with which we exchanged explanations as to his future residence. The magnificent home, to whose delights he had so long aspired; the lordly marble halls! those well-loved shadows of his mighty dreams! those whispering echoes to his every waking thought! "the cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces" of his enchantment, had faded all, and left but a

poor slab hut behind." Truly, " we are such stuff as dreams are made of," and this little Cockney sprite, for a few brief moments, almost felt the terrible depths of his own and the world's passing insignificance.

He soon rallied, however, and upon closer acquaintance I found him as deeply credulous in some matters as most other self-conceited people are. He had an unhesitating faith in the " Native Chief Tombs" of our sapient Surveyor-General. He was well crammed with remarkably marvellous natural phenomena; and I had not been long in his company before he let off at me a piece of information which he was evidently desirous should be considered original. " Remarkable insect the locust," said he—" just look at this now, a mere shell," (pointing out the object as he spoke,) " You would hardly believe it, but it is a positive fact, I assure you; indeed I have carefully watched the operation myself—the creature has such a remarkable predilection for whistling, that it actually blows its own inside out!—whistles its own body away, sir! 'tis fact, I assure you! Look at it, sir, all skin and scales, like a halfpenny herring! no nside at all—is n't it funny?" I at once, of course, admitted, with necessary gravity, the singularity and importance of this hitherto undiscovered trait in Natural History; complimented him warmly on his nice discernment, and as he seemed desirous of making notes of such peculiar circumstance, I furnished him gratuitously with a few more choice illustrations much to the same tenor and effect, which he received with an avidity increasing in proportion to the intrinsic absurdity of the several marvels detailed; and I

am not without expectation, that the enlightened world will yet hear of them some of these odd days, either in the shape of commnnications to the Royal Society, or perhaps in a separate folio of "Scientific Travels," well garnished, no doubt, with authentic notes and elaborate illustrations.

Five years subsequent to these events we met again; he was a wiser but vastly poorer man; he wondered, poor soul, how it was that agriculture and grazing (of which he knew no more than a hedgehog knows of astronomy,) had never succeeded with him. He had had neighbours, too, with no better runs or farms than his, who had made ample fortunes, and he could hardly resist regarding the peculiar way in which *his* sheep had died—the frequent and unaccountable failure of *his* crops, and the general absence of success that waited upon all *his* struggling undertakings—as strange and personally cruel dispensations of Providence. He had just begun, however, to surmise, that it was quite possible he might have done much better if he had stuck to the trade or profession to which he had been originally reared, and of the management of which, in all human probability, he possessed at least some slight comprehension.

What a thousand pities it is that man's experience must always be individual. That all the toils and troubles of others' lives, their numerous miseries and failures, should be still invariably despised, or at the best, so lightly esteemed. A more distressing species of folly than that which this unfortunate fellow had been guilty of, (and he is but the type of many,) in going to a new country like Australia, or indeed to any other country, and investiug his capital under his own untutored superintendence, in pursuits

for which his previous experience in no way fitted him, can hardly be conceived. Few, however, of the many individuals to whom these descriptions might with equal force apply, will probably be content to take the broad hint which it is the immediate purpose of this sketch indirectly but, I think, unmistakeably to convey.

A little ordinary discretion would often obviate a vast amount of anxiety and distress. *Dictum sapienti sat est!* But how many words will satisfy a fool? I shudder at the interminable calculations which this question conjures up, and gladly leave its future demonstration to the yet unread events of Time.

Opposed to the distinguishing peculiarities of the New Chum, the character of what is termed an "Old Hand" stands in boldest relief.

It will very naturally be supposed, that a great variety must exist among those whose length of residence in the colony entitles them to a place in this class; but there is a peculiar species, well recognised by the observant colonist, which, without the slightest reference to mere time of residence, particularly claims this designation; but, happily, this cosmopolitan race, though widely diffused, is limited in numbers, for its members constitute a not very amiable or inviting clique.

In appearance the "Old Hand" is tough, sallow, lean, and leathery; a sort of hungry craving look pervades his manner, a kind of moral itch diffuses itself throughout his blood and breaks out even through his parchment skin, shewing the foulness of the inward habit. The "Old Hand," in opposition to most beasts of prey, is either gregarious or

solitary, and like his prototype the wolf, not only hunts in packs, but is *all there* at a pinch alone; "*Pares cum paribus facillime congregantur.*" Dealing is his sport—business his occupation, pastime, and delight;—the game he hunts is chiefly of the New Chum breed: but illicit distillation, smuggling, sly grog-selling, or even a little quiet piracy, comes not amiss to his insatiable maw. The "Old Hand" is a general business man; it would be hard to say indeed in what he did not dabble; he has a finger in everything, not even excepting other people's pockets;—sheep, land, ships, houses, bank shares, bullion, nothing is too high for his speculations, nothing beyond his comprehensive grasp—he sells everything, and particularly those who deal with him. He made the bulk of his money in those good old times of colonial prosperity, when honesty went begging, and barefaced roguery flourished even to rankness. He is, therefore, of course, expert at law, chicanery, knows every insolvent dodge to a turn; is up to a thing or two in professional life. and is not wanting in the waifs and strays which wait upon official tactics; but he is at the same time profoundly ignorant of some things,—a childlike simplicity pervades his notion of accounts, and he has the most wavering and unsettled ideas as to the rights of property.

His method of calculating interest is complex in the extreme, and his comparative estimate of the significance of *meum* and *tuum* is very peculiar. Where ignorance is bliss, he cordially agrees with the poet, and holds it the height of folly to be wise. Where ignorance involves gain or loss, the application of the folly depends entirely upon circumstances.

The "Old Hand" usually keeps high state in his own house; eats, drinks, and smokes like a Nabob; his cirriage and horses are generally superb, his furniture costly and radiant with tinsel and glitter. "Fine feathers make fine birds;" his plate, however, is not usually massive or extensive, for he knows the danger of temptation, from his recollection, perhaps, of its having been too much for himself in days of yore, and he wisely, therefore, abstains from leading others into similar jeopardy. His servants are numerous, and literally at most times his *familiars*. He indulges, too, occasionally, in other sport than that of mercantile speculation—the Turf, the Ring, the Gaming-house, are the diverting arenas into which he transfers his business habits, and among the allurements of which his main avocation of money-making is still successfully prosecuted. Here the "New Chum" and the "Old Hand" are wonderfully at home; their distinguishing characteristics most conspicuous, and the beautiful simplicity with which such opposite characters blend, the quiet facility with which they play into each other's hands, exhibit an admirable adaptation of nature to extreme cases, which almost reconciles one to some of its most antagonistic dispensations. The vulture and the dove are evidently destined for each other; and however ill disposed the latter may sometimes feel to this arrangement, it is clearly a very rebellious dove that would wish to turn the tables on the vulture, or in any way disturb the harmony of this equitable arrangement. "We must all eat or be eaten" is a well-established physical truism, which can only, perhaps, be compared in point of form with the equally-recognised moral apothegm of the "Old Hand,"

that we must all *do* or *be done*, and it would obviously be revolutionary in the extreme to attempt the slightest innovation upon either of these grand constitutional principles.

In conversation the "Old Hand" is also remarkable; a vague sort of hyperbole distinguishes his ideas, and a highly figurative or allegorical style pervades the language in which he expresses them. His lingual flights, however, are rather carnal than exalted, and a peculiar hankering after disagreeable expletives is more observable than might be desired. What mysterious property there can be in *blood* that it should infuse itself so conspicuously through every variety of his discourse, entirely surpasses my comprehension; but so it is, a gory tinge seems mingled with his nature; a sanguineous hue appears to suffuse itself throughout his material system. This fair and beautiful world,—things animate or inanimate,—the wonders and varieties of creation,—his fellow-creatures, the animal kingdom generally, and particularly sheep and cattle, are apparently to his imagination deeply imbued with this dye incarnadine. When the immortal Harvey scientifically confirmed the important fact on the subject of blood, which Servetus decidedly discovered, he could never have anticipated such a stupendous revolution in our current ideas as is evidenced throughout the conversation alluded to. When irate, the "Old Hand" appears to be violently addicted to adjectives, and blood is invariably his most convenient circulating medium; so that, like the laws of Draco, there is no end to the amount of blood with which he is surcharged; and a b—y green tree, or a b—y white bullock, as well as

things tangible and intangible, visible and invisible, are objects in nature, of the very existence of which we are daily and hourly being apprised. This is, I repeat, what I never could understand. It is, however, very remarkable (not to say unpleasant,) when you are overdone with it. In considering the various peculiarities of this race, another remarkable circumstance occurs to our observation, namely, that while there is among the "New Chum" genus none of the softer sex, there exists a very numerous variety of that gender among the order "Old Hand," which, to say the least of it, is extraordinary.

The tact of women is proverbial, and it requires, I am afraid, no deep research to perceive upon what principle of action,—in spite of her reputed unworldliness,—the former is based. The simple fact, however, speaks volumes; there never yet was a female "New Chum" anywhere; no mortal man had ever cognizance of such an existence. No matter what her natural disadvantages may have been, whether she has been secluded from the world, left totally uneducated, or otherwise neglected, she has tact, secretiveness, or discretion enough to cover them all. This may be clever, or it may be cunning, but it is hardly to be accounted amiable. Her non-association with the former race is, however, abundantly compensated for by her distinguished presence in the latter. Among "Old Hands" lovely woman is much too commonly recognized, forming, in fact, a distinct though closely-allied branch of this more interesting than agreeable stock.

The "Old Hand" feminine is usually more robust than

is commonly assumed to be compatible with perfect beauty; and her visage is often bold and rubicund;—her style of dress, too, is decidedly anti-Parisian, her manners somewhat tinged with *brusquerie*, and her morals facile to a fault. In fact, although presenting wide external points of opposition to each other, "Old Hands," male and female, cannot be considered as inappropriately matched; and woe to the "New Chum" upon whose devoted purse or person the combined energy of such a force is uninterruptedly brought to bear. I would advise avoidance of such a danger as determinedly as I would the embraces of a Bear, or the friendly coil of a Boa Constrictor. Happily for colonial society, this generation, though far from extinct, is at present fast disappearing, and a very much better race is springing up; but I still would warn the young and inexperienced, when landing on these shores, to be most wary of anything approaching to the characteristic of the "Old Hand," and above all things to eschew that self-opiniation which, of all other distinguishing peculiarities, is most conducive to the disastrous consequences which so frequently befall young men upon their first introduction into habits and associations so thoroughly new and conflicting. "It is hard to play with pitch and yet go undefiled." "None but fools play with edge tools," and a host of other wise saws and ancient adages, might be quoted as warnings in point; but if youthful blood will not take heed from such gathered gems of ancient wisdom, they must even take their chance, and rub through life and all its troubles as they best may.

The voice of warning has been raised; let not the young or the unwary pass it idly by, or they will only learn too late the lesson of discretion.

No. 9.—BUSHING IT.

AN EXPLORING PARTY.

One of the most noticeable characteristics of pastoral avocations in a flourishing district, is the prodigious numecal increase of the flocks and herds: hence, notwithstanding the apparently huge tracts of country taken up by Squatters at the outset of their adventures, it becomes almost always necessary in the course of a few years, either to reduce their stock, or push out further into the unsettled districts of the Interior, in search of room for the surplus thousands which overstock and would eventually destroy the tender and uncultivated grasses of their runs.

In common with most of my brother Graziers, the necessity has been duly brought home to me, and finding the desperate alternative of "*boiling down*" for the sake of the tallow anything but profitable or satisfactory,—although as a pressing expedient it has effected so much,—I determined, in conjunction with two of my neighbours who were similarly circumstanced, to take an exploratory excursion to the northward of our Stations, in seareh of eligible country.

Such an expedition, although of frequent occurrence now-a-days, is anything but a light and unimportant affair, even among the initiated. It is nevertheless one of those necessary evils common to the Squatter, and it is endured accordingly. By an exploring party I am desirous it should

be understood that I do not in any way allude to those monster national affairs,—the growth of executive finance, or the liberality of town subscriptions,—those are quite of another class. The sort of party to which I refer has its origin in the pressing exigencies of a few private individuals, and is conducted entirely by their personal enterprise, devoid, of course, of those costly and elaborate equipments, which far more conspicuously distinguish these magnificently expensive undertakings than the brilliancy attendant upon their results. The justly celebrated exploration of the much too enterprising Leichardt is a remarkable exception to this class of expeditions. His means, however, were most imperfect; yet with these limited resources, how vast were his achievements—how firm and enduring will be his fame! But, alas! in fame alone, it is to be feared, the Traveller now lives; there scarcely remains a reasonable hope that we shall ever see his face again. He has, too surely, fallen a sacrifice to the cause of science which he dearly loved,—a martyr to the growing interests of humanity.

There are few positions in which the young Bushman experiences such a sensation of change as in the continued occasion for "Bushing it," essential to the progress of an exploring party. Travelling day after day beyond the uttermost trace of habitation, and sleeping night after night in that most airy of all bed-rooms, the open air itself, amidst the vast but rugged magnificence of nature, must necessarily at first trial be felt by such an one to be somewhat more interesting than agreeable; it soon, however, comes by use to be endured, and often ultimately to be much enjoyed. There is a proud feeling of freedom, too, and

strange delight when you have overcome the initiatory breaking in, resulting from the thoroughly isolated and self-dependent position attendant upon the fearless but arduous exploits which daily wait upon your march,—a wild pleasure, which amply compensates for any loss of those easy luxuries of life which this species of adventure necessarily excludes.

Not but the regular or experienced Bushman receives considerable training for these hardships from the rough and primitive style of domestic arrangement which he begins from the first moment of his squatting existence to acquire. In previous papers upon this subject I have attempted slight sketches of my own earliest impressions of "Camping Out," with other minor details of the various hardships, adventures, and privations, incidental to ordinary life, I propose now, therefore, only to give an outline of a private exploring expedition, in which, as before mentioned, the want of room for our sheep was the main inducement, and the obtaining the necessary country for additional runs our only reward.

Just glancing at the particulars of the rough but carefully-considered outfit requisite for a journey of many months' duration through a wild, unknown, and uninhabited region, and passing over the mere items of tea, sugar, flour, tobacco, salt, and soap, which constituted our only supplies, I proceed at once, bag, baggage, and accoutrements, beyond the settled or inhabited districts, and prepare to pitch our camp on the northern extremity of the then but only newly-discovered district of Darling Downs.

We had just traversed the Condamine plain, a distance

of about sixty miles, after a journey of two days, without food or water, the plain being a dead level, of a somewhat oblong, irregular form, varying from forty to eighty miles in diameter, and apparently having been at one time a basin, no doubt, filled with water, a great portion of it being, as I imagine, below the level of the Condamine river, by which and tributary creeks it is mainly skirted, the approaches to these water-courses rising considerably, and forming decided embankments in their immediate vicinity. At this time the plain retained no vestige of water and had evidently long been dry. Not a tree nor shrub enlivened its dreary expanse, and advancing towards its centre until the horizon narrowed the view to the unbroken level of long dried grass, that heaved and fell with every passing breeze, and waved like small undulating ripples on the surface of a clouded sea, an ocean-like similitude was strikingly pourtrayed. This appearance is at times vividly increased by the vibration of those refracted rays of light which produce the phenomenon of the Mirage, a deception peculiarly tantalizing to the thirsty traveller across its arid plains.

At length, however, we reached its skirts and fresher grass, and the water-loving casuarinas, with open forest ridges in the rear, betokened our approach to that most important element, water, and gladly we pushed on to taste of its relief.

But hold! sounds not to be neglected meet our ears; from the margin of that inviting pool the echo of a tomahawk is plainly heard; the cracking of dead timber, and the mingled sounds of many voices bespeak a large encamp-

ment. Approaching cautiously, we beheld an unusually large tribe of Blacks, in the act of preparing for the night's repast. Numerous fires threw up their streams of smoke, bearing upon the evening breeze the odious stench of scorched opossum hides. A confused mass of moving figures flitted about in utter unconsciousness of our vicinity.

Consulting together as to our most prudent course, under the unfortunate circumstance of this being apparently the only available water-hole for miles round, we halted unobserved within a few hundred yards of their fires. But instinct was not to be so easily controlled as cautious reason might desire; and thirst, that most distressing pain, pressed heavily upon us all, particularly, it would appear, upon our poor horses, who speedily abolished all our schemes of caution and concealment by their loud snorts of mingled delight and impatience at the sight of the coveted but pre-occupied pool, now lying in placid and tantalizing beauty at our feet.

In a moment a startling change disturbed the unconcerned security of the camp. Every eye and ear were eagerly strained to comprehend the nature of this strange and sudden interruption. Our course of action was necessarily soon decided, for to pass on without relieving the horrible thirst which now nearly maddened us, and to risk another day and night with only a vague uncertainty even then of finding the required relief, was more than either human or equine nature felt disposed to bear,—and to remain, or seem to hesitate, is always in such circumstances imprudent policy. Steadily, therefore, we advanced upon the wondering tribe, our guns unslung and pistols carefully bestowed, lest danger,

in any of its many forms, should suddenly require the potent aid of such efficient though unpleasant auxiliaries.

The sight of a large tribe of Savages,—no matter what may be their disposition or warlike tendencies,—upon their first beholding civilized man, must of course, at all times, be a startling curiosity. This might be readily supposed, even if we had not the authority of history, as in the celebrated conquest of Mexico, or in the equally remarkable but more revolting successes of Pizarro, to exemplify it. To note, however, minutely each particular of the various and rapidly-succeeding impressions of overwhelming astonishment with which they were affected, a less exciting position than that which we possessed on the present occasion would certainly have been desirable; nevertheless, in spite of the anxious scrutiny with which we felt compelled to watch their every indication of hostility, enough was obvious of the terrible admiration with which our sudden apparition was regarded to prove that wonder—absorbing, paralyzing wonder—was the ruling, if not the only emotion of their minds. To what ultimate phrenzy this might lead we could not possibly tell, but well knew it was essential to our safety carefully to watch and firmly to stand upon our guard.

Awhile as we approached they only stared in silent, open-mouthed amazement. It is impossible to conceive a more complete demonstration of wondering trepidation. If the whole system of nature had suddenly changed they could not have been more electrified. Arrested in the momentary impulse of anxious enquiry as to the unwonted sounds which had preceded our appearance, they were grouped about in wild

imposing attitudes. Not a sound, except the advancing footfalls of our horses, could be heard; but the visibly trembling muscles, the suspended breath, and quiveringly-dilated frames, which, with increasing distinctness marked our nearer approach, were evidences of severe mental struggles too violent long to be endured.

Our own position, also, now became somewhat critical. We were within thirty yards of their main body, too near indeed the range of their spears to be agreeable, although they appeared to be without the effective "wamra;" but as yet no demonstration had been given, no sign of any definite movement on their part afforded, by which we could gather any clue to their probable intentions; nothing, in fact, was manifested but the astounded faculty of wonderment which I have endeavoured to describe. Yet on that we mainly relied, and wisely too; for it appeared it was only the steady manner of our approach that had bound them thus long under this potent fascination; for upon the first slight deviation from the order of our movements,—viz. the shying of one of the horses, and the momentary confusion consequent upon the accident,—with one accord, and uttering frightful yells, they fled in heedless disorder; many of them rushing through the water-hole, as affording the readiest means of escape. In a moment we were alone; the peculiar snake-like powers of concealment I have formerly alluded to, but find it quite impossible accurately to describe, —like a shoal of land-crabs from a muddy beach,—they suddenly disappeared; the long grass on the margin of the pool seemed magically to have swallowed them up, and the lighted fires, the half-cooked food, and the

palpable disorder of the camp, in the midst of which we now dismounted, alone bore evidences of the recent multitude which lately thronged the spot.

It was particularly lucky for at least one of our party that their excitement took this retrogressive mode of exhibition, for the immediate cause of the confusion alluded to was, that one of our party, who was remarkably short-sighted, had, by the shying of his horse, lost his spectacles, with them also his presence of mind, and of course all power of either assisting himself or any one else; I never in my life saw a man more thoroughly or more suddenly reduced to helplessness. He seemed incapable even of getting off his horse, and must have been as completely in the power of his enemies, had they attacked him, as if he had been bound hand and foot and cast into the midst of them. In spite of our anxious position, we could not restrain our mirth at this comical exhibition. Cautiously, however, we descended to the water and relieved our craving thirst, first restoring to our bewildered companion his lost eye-sight, with many admonitions as to future care of the frail but important adjuncts to his sight and safety, with which he had so lately parted company.

At the time of which I am now writing, 1842, the aborigines in this district were accounted extremely dangerous. In my opinion there is,—and with the Blacks of the interior generally has been,—but one period in the course of their gradual association with the Whites, which, pre-supposing ordinary care and vigilance, is at all to be apprehended, and that period is, when their first sensations of astonishment are overcome, and they begin to see and comprehend

something of the means and limit of the white man's power; a power at first, to their ideas, so indefinite and so illimitable.

In their thoroughly wild condition I have generally found them so physically prostrated by the abject terror with which they first behold a creature so wholly different from themselves, and armed with destructive agents, more wonderful to their conceptions than anything their most excited imaginations had ever formerly devised. Of course cases where a whole tribe has stumbled suddenly upon one or two helpless, unarmed, and probably starving wanderers, and perceiving their physical inferiority, have ruthlessly destroyed them, can hardly be taken as exceptions to the present proposition, neither are the instances on record of the singular courage and ferocity of some of the coast tribes to be here admitted as contradictions of this general description. Those tribes may be almost regarded as forming a part of a different and certainly very far superior race. The bountiful supply of food which the sea and the mouths of all the coast rivers produce, contribute a marked aspect to their physical development unknown to the interior tribes, whilst the comparatively active and enterprising employment incidental to their joint occupation of Bushmen, Fishermen, and Mariners—and the skill, perseverance, and ingenuity, which the successful prosecution of these several pursuits necessarily entails, exercise a no less striking influence upon the characteristics of their minds; and the result is strictly in accordance with the physical condition under which they exist. They are mostly found to be a fine, powerful, and daring race, and as, from their immediate vicinity to the

sea, where vessels may constantly be seen passing, and often, perhaps, putting in for shelter, for water, or for the magnificent pine or cedar, which grows profusely almost to the river's edge, it would be exceedingly difficult to determine when first they saw a white man's face, or how they acted when they did so; I conclude that, therefore, no direct evidence to the contrary of what I have assumed can, even from these superior tribes, and under such peculiarly favourable circumstances, be produced.

I would not here for a moment be understood to deny that attacks and murders, by the interior and constitutionally-inferior Blacks, have at various times been perpetrated at what would appear to have been their first meeting with a party of white men. I say apparently, however, for it by no means follows, because the white man has observed no sign or indication of his vicinity to a tribe of Natives, that he and his party may not have been the constant object of their watchful regard for days or weeks preceding their encounter; and who shall pretend to estimate the effect of this unseen but unremitting observation upon the character of their subsequent conduct—who can define how far their prowling watchfulness disarms astonishment of its attendant terrors,—or how their long and deliberate preparations may not have subdued within them the almost supernatural element of wonder, which else so utterly unmans them? At any rate this influence appears to be considerable, and my experience of its operations leads me to suppose that it is almost invariable; and just as far as they have measured the means and prepared themselves for the consequences of the white man's power, so far may he estimate the precise

amount of danger to be apprehended, either from their direct or insidious attacks upon his life or property. When they become what is called thoroughly civilized, or, in plainer terms, are brought completely under the influence of their white usurpers, they are in general harmless, sometimes trustworthy, and often eminently useful, in such bush matters as their natural habits and remarkable instincts facilitate, and which can advantageously be brought to administer to the task required.

But to return from this long digression. Having watered our horses, and slaked our own violent thirst, we now turned our scrutiny more closely towards the affrighted tribes who were so lately the occupants of the camp in which we stood. The country around was still very open; the belt of timber which marked the course of the water being divided from the open box and gum-tree ridges in the rear by a long line of sedgy swamp, in the tall grass of which we presumed the startled creatures must be hidden. With some difficulty we surrounded a portion of them, and endeavoured to ascertain something as to the "lay" of the country, and the prospects of water in our projected route; but although we tried them in two or three different dialects, and pressed them sorely in that awful confusion of tongues called broken English, which is generally thought to be so efficacious when addressing foreigners, of whose language you are ignorant, we failed, either from their excessive fright, or our supreme ignorance, to obtain any information from them, and were fain to proceed on our way, not caring to risk passing the night in their immediate neighbourhood. We took with us the wherewithal to make a damper, and to relieve the

remaining cravings of our appetite, we shot also a couple of ducks, to further help out the contemplated repast; and doubtless by this means struck additional terror into the breasts of the invisible numbers that lay in ambush around us; for although we camped in a secluded dell, within a mile of the spot of this adventure, no sign of their having followed us could be traced.

During the four or five succeeding days we proceeded northerly, travelling over a very broken mountainous country, intercepted by many creeks and scrubs, through which country we were able to make but little progress, and tedious and laborious travelling it was; here stony ranges impeded our way, and there impassable belts of brigalow and myall blocked up our path. But patience and perseverance are qualities which grow upon the practised Bushman, and a sort of invincible determination, half fool-hardiness, half-imperative necessity, make up his sturdy character. He has so often to face sudden and immediate danger,—he is so often driven to urgent expedients,—so often to proceed so far into the very jaws of danger, as to render return impossible, that characteristics such as these not only grow to be a part of, but are in time essential to his nature, and mostly, it must be admitted, that by his luck, or his indomitable energy, or whatever it may be that helps him, he generally succeeds.

But to return to our own journey. We had again been two days without water, toiling like slaves through a most difficult country,—dry, barren, mountainous, and broken. On the morning of the following day, as we advanced on our desolate way, our black boy sighted recent tracks of

blacks, tending towards the direction of our route. The country now became gradually less broken; the formal pine and stunted shrubs gave place to box and gum of better growth, and symptoms of herbage afforded promise of a better country for our miserable horses. By-and-bye one heard the sound of hunting in the opposite belt of scrub, and the knowledge that water must be near at hand came to us with that feeling of mingled hope and fear which results in cases like these, from a long acquaintance with the uncertainty of finding it, (unless it happens to be in pools or streams,) although you may be ever so certain of its proximity, for the blacks have numerous springs, (probably discovered by accident,) to which in seasons of drought they resort, but which from their minuteness it is often next to impossible to trace, more particularly as they rarely camp at these springs, but convey in small buckets, or cooliemans, the very limited supply which they consume at their evening's repast.

We proceeded onwards and were evidently soon observed, for the yells, and shouts, and outrageous noises employed in the species of hunting peculiar to these scrubs, ceased at once, and was succeeded by a calm, which felt ominous by the sudden violence of the contrast. With an imprudence which desperation alone could warrant, we entered the thicket, cutting our way as we advanced through the dense and tangled vines and closely twining underwood, forcing and hewing a passage at the peril of our lives through the hostile barrier of trees and shrubs, until we emerged into the open country on the opposite side; but no trace or indication of water met our view. A long grass gully lay before us,

belted on our right by barren rocky ranges, while to our left and in our rear, an apparently interminable line of brigalow scrub bound in our path. We could perceive no alternative but to proceed; it was impossible, in our jaded condition, that we could have reached as far back as the last place where water had been seen, and the valley looked as promising as any such can look in so dry and unwatered a country. Proceeding onwards our hopes increased; an extremely beautiful parasite, belonging to the species *Loranthus*, grew here abundantly, covering hundreds of the surrounding trees with its gorgeous flowers, and presenting a delightful contrast to the surrounding foliage. The scarlet passion-flower grew here too, in beautiful profusion, and towards noon we found a species of palm, or sago-tree, from the pith of which we obtained a fecula which was most refreshing, and which I have no doubt is the veritable sago. The tree yielded an abundant supply, of which we partook gratefully and unsparingly, but the sufferings of our poor horses were by no means appeased by seeing us wallow in this delicious moisture, and again we urged on our way in search of food and water.

There were now numerous water-courses travelling the valley, but all quite dry. In one hole we found the skeletons of native dogs, who apparently had come there to drink, but finding nothing had dropped down in weakness or despair and died there. This was anything but a cheering prospect to proceed upon, but necessity has no law, so on we went, the tracks of animals becoming each moment more apparent. At length we heard again the chirp of birds—a most welcome sound at all times,—and rounding a point

of the projecting belt of hills, we came suddenly in sight of an immense herd of Kangaroos, feeding and hopping about contentedly. The deepening and now numerous tracks which beset us on every side,—all converging in one direction, together with the presence of such a numerous marsupial family,—assured us that the much-coveted water was at hand. And so indeed it was; but, alas! for our hopes; a muddy hole, with hardly enough moisture in it to soften the clay of which its bed was composed, was all that awaited us. In vain we searched up and down the neighbouring gullies, no other water was to be found; we therefore returned to this dismal spot, and scooped out a hole in the centre of the hollow, in the hope of drainage, and herein we were partially successful; but oh, the horrible filth which exuded from the mud; I shall never forget it. The very horses,, although dying with thirst, refused at first to touch it. We strained a quantity, however, through a blanket into an open bag, made out of a Mackintosh cloak, and by this means managed in some measure to allay the horrid thirst that preyed upon them. As for ourselves, we vainly tried by added quantities of tea and sugar to overcome the frightful flavour of the filth: it still remained the veriest liquid slime that ever mortal was condemned to taste. We shot a couple of Kangaroos and drank their blood with infinite relish. We also mixed our damper with blood, in preference to using any of this abominable water.

The weather was at this time very warm, and travelling in these arid regions was daily becoming more difficult and fatiguing. Two days more, however, we were doomed to

pass without water, and with nothing but an old crow and our blood-mixed bread to eat, and our strength began to yield to these incessant deprivations. Two of our horses died too, and the remainder became so weak and exhausted that we had the greatest difficulty even to lead them. At length the joyful sight of that most necessary element, water, relieved our desponding minds. Breaking suddenly from the scrubby ranges, among which we had for some time past been toiling, we descended a grassy gully which opened out into extensive and gently-undulating plains, or downs, through which, sparkling and dancing in the sunset light, a noble river wound its silvery way. Our wretched horses seemed instinctively to know of our approach to this delightful relief long before we had obtained a sight of it, they pushed briskly forward, snorting in a faint pleased manner, as we advanced, which as we approached grew in excitement until we found some difficulty in restraining their impetuosity.

The river, (since named by Leichardt the Dawson,) where we came upon it, was narrow, but of great depth, and we had to travel along its steep banks for at least a couple of miles before we could find a safe or convenient watering-place. Here we camped, and in less than five minutes every man and horse of the party was swimming in this delicious stream. The country for many miles around us being well grassed, and abundantly stocked with game, we determined upon resting here for some days to recruit our wasted strength, and to afford the horses an opportunity of rallying.

Numerous indications of the frequent presence of large

tribes of Natives were everywhere manifested, and on the night of the second day of our sojourn there, we were surprised at perceiving behind a tree which was overhanging our camp, one of their scouts cautiously reconnoitering our little band. Upon detecting his presence we all started to our feet, but before we could get our guns he had flown, and the sound of his retreating footsteps alone denoted the course he had taken. From this time we deemed it necessary to keep watch.

We now set about examining the country, and after a few days' pleasant search, we fixed upon the sites of three very promising looking Stations upon the main and back waters of this beautiful river, which we duly apportioned and marked out, and which, considering our toil, expense, and trouble in finding them, we flattered ourselves we were in some measure entitled to. This, however, involves a political question which I am unwilling here to discuss. It is sufficient to observe that we did *not* get those runs, nor any compensation for them, and our toil, expense, and trouble were thrown away; for, according to the regulations, they were described, published, and disposed of, by tender, when, as a matter of course, they were bought in by a Sydney speculator, who sold them at a handsome profit to some new arrival possessed of more money than wit; who, not knowing exactly what to do with them when he had got them, wasted a good deal of time, and squandered heaps more money, in his various experiments to turn them to account, until he ultimately discovered that the original price,—dear as he had bought them,—was not the greatest

amount he had to pay for this his first sample of colonial experience.

This is a grievance of which the pioneers of the forest have long had to complain; but it is a grievance which mercantile men in Sydney have been unwilling to admit. The Squatter's time, expense, and hazardous labour, in searching for and reclaiming from the desert wilderness such distant but fertile tracts of country,—a labour which beyond a doubt has vastly extended the limits, and materially enhanced the value and importance of the Colony,—has never yet been properly estimated or encouraged. It has hitherto been for him to sow that others might reap.

But to return from my digression. It only remained for us now, either to retrace our weary steps, or to strike out a new and if possible better path homeward from our new-found "runs." The latter, of course, although attended with new dangers, was evidently the proper course to pursue, for it was necessary that some practicable route should be discovered, or our sheep and cattle would never be able, even in the most propitious season, to travel there. Taking a straight course, therefore, we again set forth to brave the perils and privations of this barren and inhospitable Bush; and it was with many a lingering look towards the bright glancing water of this beautiful stream, that we again struck into the interminable maze of brigalow scrub, which faced our path and shut it from our sight.

No sooner, however, had we again got fairly into the order of our march, than the spirit of enterprise returned, and we longed to make an effort to discover what amount of truth there might be in the vague rumours which from

time to time had been circulated respecting the existence to the westward of luxurious downs, surpassing, it was said, even the magnificent pastures on the banks of the Condamine. This idea, once entertained, it was impossible to discard it; we lost no time, therefore, in putting it in train for action. A council of ways and means was held, with a view of examining into the state of our supplies, and although this investigation demonstrated the possibility of considerable difficulty and danger in the attempt, still where all were willing, it needed greater obstacles than "short supplies" to check the undertaking. Accordingly, hit or miss, we struck our camp, and steered due west towards the great "*divisio aquarum*," which at this point receded to an unusual distance from the coast.

We found this route much easier to pursue than that which we had recently been travelling; and following down the several open gullies which skirted and separated the intervening ranges, we were seldom either without plenty of grass or water; and as each day's journey brought us into country more thickly stocked with game, we were enabled to husband our slender resources of flour, and to feast sumptuously every day upon fish, flesh, and fowl, with sago pith, wild blackberries, honey, potatoe yams, and occasionally a stray bunya-bunya, by way of vegetable or dessert, washing down these substantial repasts with copious libations of water or tea, and at times with a draught from the native apple-tree, the sap of which jets out abundantly when tapped, and yields a wholesome, slightly invigorating, and not unpalatable beverage. The barley-grass, (*Panicum lævinode,*) as we attained a greater altitude, grew

abundantly upon the plains and along the banks of the water-courses on our track, and afforded us an excellent substitute for flour, as the seeds of this valuable grass, when well bruised and worked into dough, make very passable bread.

But rainy weather came upon us, and soon effected a serious alteration in our circumstances. The soil over which we happened to be travelling when this tropical deluge commenced, was of a red sandy nature, and most peculiarly rotten; for miles on every side the whole country seemed to have been curiously undermined, as if by rats or rabbits, so that our horses' feet sank to the depth of ten or twelve inches each step they took, which was bad enough in dry weather, but after a week's heavy rain, during which time we were compelled by its violence to remain at camp, we found it utterly impossible to travel, the horses literally sinking in up to their bellies every time they moved, even for the purpose of feeding. In this miserable plight, scarcely able even to stir ourselves without bogging, we toiled on for three weeks, not progressing much more than a mile a day, although we worked from morning to night. At length we reached the dividing range, where a change of soil happily relieved us from this dreadful quagmire. Through the rough and broken sand-stone ridges outlying the main range we experienced considerable difficulty in effecting a passage, but on our emerging into the open country beyond we came upon a magnificent river, (now known as the Maranoa,) flowing in a south-westerly direction, through open well-grassed country.

Here there appeared to be abundant pasturage for illimit-

able flocks and herds, and our provisions giving daily symptoms of rapid decrease, we deemed it prudent no longer to delay our return. We followed down this superb river by easy stages through a beautifully-diversified country to its junction with a river of equal magnitude, coming in from the north-east, which we conjectured must be the Condamine. and fancying ourselves therefore too far both to the south and west, we travelled up its course, crossing two or three important rivers, and innumerable of those minor streams which so plentifully intersect the fertile and extensive tracts of country now known as the Fitz-Roy Down and the Maranoa districts. A portion of the Interior to this day unoccupied, and which, from its vast capabilities and its advantages of soil, water, and climate, is capable of supporting as much stock as the whole of the other squatting districts put together.

We fortunately fell in here with a friendly tribe of Natives, who guided us by a new and easy route to the out station we had last left on Darling Downs, where we arrived safe and well, but exceedingly wasted and fatigued, losing only three of our horses, after an absence in the Bush of nearly five months; whence in a few days, invigorated by the hearty hospitality which distinguishes the Australian Squatter, we resumed our journey homewards, where in due time we safely arrived, to pursue the accustomed and monotonous avocation of looking after those precious "muttons," to save which from the ignominious destination of the "boiling down" pot we had undertaken our recent excursion.

BUSHRANGERS.

NUMEROUS Bushrangers have from time to time infested the interior portions of this country, whose exploits have more or less held *in terrorem* the inhabitants of the districts in which they have been harboured.

Bushranging was in a great measure the result of an abuse of the now by-gone system of "*assignment*," which gave facilities for the exercise of personal tyranny towards the convict servants so employed, which no operation of the law was found adequate to mitigate or repress. The effect, however, was as mischievous as it was notorious; hundreds of men whom kindly treatment, or even common justice, might have reclaimed and rendered useful members of society, were thus forced upon fresh paths of crime, to scourge and devastate the country.

A vast deal of nonsense, however, has been published on the subject of colonial slavery in former times: erroneous and exaggerated statements of convicts themselves have been taken and permitted to constitute serious charges against a class of gentlemen whose position as officers in the British army should at least have exempted them from such ill-founded and unsubstantiated censure. An article (No. 97, vol. 4,) which I have just read in that entertaining and usually truthful publication, Dickens's "Household Words," entitled, "*Three Colonial Epochs*," contain, I regret to say, the most monstrous tissue of fictions on the subject which it is possible to conceive. The names of Howard,

Wilberforce, and Clarkson need hardly have been evoked to usher in so dark a history of crime as that which is here alluded to. There surely can be no parallel (however rigorous the discipline,) between the punishment due to a transported felon, and the iniquities practised upon innocent and unoffending negroes, stolen from their peaceful homes, and dragged into endless and revolting servitude; and to attempt to decry the one by playing upon the warm sympathies excited by the other is, to say the least, a most unworthy task. The convicts, in the earlier days of the colony, when they far outnumbered their military guards, were necessarily, by the most natural of human laws, kept rigidly under control; they could not otherwise have been restrained at all; and that under such imperative coercion cases of individual or particular hardship might arise, is hardly to be wondered at, certainly not disputed. But to found upon such possible exceptions statements of the kind recorded in the article adverted to is monstrous in the extreme. The real evils of the system I have long deplored, but it is wicked to invent evils in order to cry down a system which in its design and general results was good and eminently successful. There is no truth whatever in the main tenor of the article referred to, and it is to be deeply regretted that a work so universally read and esteemed for useful and authentic information, should have been permitted to become the medium for diffusing so much error.

That individual hardships and particular cruelties were experienced at the period alluded to cannot be denied; but that it was the custom rather than the exception to perpetuate gross and deliberate iniquity,—that overseers were

specially selected with reference to their strength and brutal characters, rather than to any reasonable fitness for such offices of trust,—that useful mechanics, or personal servants of the government officials, (who were military officers, and mostly gentlemen by birth, habit, and education,) were permitted by their masters to commit unpunished almost any species of crime, because they happened to be serviceable to them,—is all so preposterously untrue, that it is really a matter of wonder how it could find a place in such a publication. Such charges impute unreservedly to Governor Phillip, and to every gentleman who accompanied him on the by no means agreeable task of forming a penal settlement, an amount of villany and corruption, which in their sphere of life, and in the responsible position in which they stood to the British government, is totally incredible.

In later days, when the colony had in some measure grown out of its entirely penal character, and when convict servants were distributed in various parts of the country upon the system of "assignment" to almost any free settler who had waste lands to clear and till, or manual labour of any kind to be performed, a wider field of course was opened to personal tyranny, favouritism, and injustice; and it must be admitted, that under this state of things very much gross partiality and the most abominable cruelty was practised,—enough indeed without the smallest aid from exaggeration, to make an honest man blush for the degradation of his species. And it was this evil, this ever-impending, never-ceasing, domestic personal tyranny, which drove these wretched creatures to the perpetration of further crime. It was this brutal barbarity which peopled our

peaceful Bush with infuriate human beasts of prey, and loaded the accursed gallows-tree with hundreds of its most desperate victims.

But happily even for the prolific cause of mischief, the great majority of the convict population was exempt. The grand evil of the system lay in its inequality of operation; good masters often got bad men, and *vice versâ;* thus in some cases the punishment of servitude was dreadfully severe, where possibly the offender had been guilty only of some venial crime; whilst in others, a life of comparative ease and comfort, with every inducement and advantage of position for the rapid acquirement of wealth, awaited (it might be,) a ruffian of the deepest dye. But the strong arm of the law, and every effort on the part of the executive government, so far from participation in or tolerating such abuses, were ever urged most strenuously to punish or prevent these grievous exceptions to the administration of justice; and that they failed in some instances to effect this object is to be attributed more to the peculiar difficulties with which the system was encompassed, than to any corruption of motives or want of earnestness of purpose. And this opinion I am satisfied will be confirmed by every dispassionate person who has had experience of the working of the system of assignment in the colony.

In many districts of the interior very great natural facilities exist for Bushranging, of which the concealment afforded by the innumerable creeks and gullies of the mountain ranges is of course among the most important; and in numerous instances, favoured by such impervious harbours of refuge, years have rolled over the devoted heads of these desperate

maranders, and they have carried on with impunity their wolf-like occupation,—a foe to every man, and every man their foe,—evading detection often until the horrors even of success have driven them voluntarily to yield their forfeit lives rather than linger on in the daily endurance of those dreadful miseries incidental to their position.

There has always been a certain degree of romantic charm attached to the wild pursuits of highwaymen; a notable excitement respecting the so-styled manly fearlessness of their exploits, which is held to rob this particular crime of half its heinousness, and to elevate it far above the petty meannesses of ordinary theft or dirty pilfering. This pseudo sympathy has been fostered by insidious fictions which can hardly be too seriously reprobated, for such views are no less injurious than untrue. There can be no comparison of merit whatever between such wide degrees of crime,—the one is but a hardier and more desperate species of villany than the other, and its perpetrator justly pays the heavier reckoning for his heavier offence.

A more mistaken feeling than that which judges of a Bushranger's mode of life as one of wild and not unpleasureable excitement, by a fancied contemplation of him, mounted on a noble steed, armed to the teeth with deadly and unerring weapons, and valiantly demanding toll from every unarmed man he meets, can hardly be conceived. What pleasure has he in his gallant steed beyond the speed with which it has the power of conveying him from the ever-present danger that lurks behind each rock or tree? What feelings haunt him in his silent solitary lair? Cut off from human intercourse, denied all human sympathy, a price upon

his head, which forbids companionship in guilt, and tempts even former friends to hunt him down like bloodhounds on his track? The startling fact that a certain and ignominious death has frequently been sought,—that many have voluntarily yielded themselves to the gallows to escape the horrors of such a dreadful position, is a sufficient answer to that morbid admiration which seeks to encircle the effects of mere brute desperation with the fictitious halo of manly courage.

I do not mean it to be inferred that the stings of conscience conduce much to this result; I have always been inclined to look suspiciously upon the operation of that mysterious influence called conscience, particularly when it is exhibited in a manifest terror of the law; and I am much disposed to believe that the ever-haunting fear of being discovered,—that miserable dread, which apprehends in every face the lineaments of detection,—is often confused with the very much too loose ideas which prevail concerning conscience. I have witnessed the operations of this harrowing fear in active combination with the most remorseless villany. It has been known to exist among Bushrangers in particular, even when their daily practises of murder and rapine have been perpetrated with perfect coolness and indifference. In some instances upon record there can be traced the constant and deliberate habit of bloodshed co-existent with these so-called horrors of remorse. In my opinion, conscience has nothing whatever to do with it: fear, personal dread of consequences, the painful feeling of suspense, and nothing else, is the thing that troubles their guilty minds. There is no regret for the evil they have done,

further than that it has involved them in peril; and this same fear, without the slightest help from conscience, or any other such compunctious visitings of nature, has often been found so intolerable as to have driven the wretched beings so haunted to court inevitable punishment rather than endure the horrors of their uncertain tenure of life and safety. It is the hourly fear of an impending fate they cannot shun, and not repentance for crimes committed, which wrings their tortured souls, and drives them in the desperation of their sufferings to forfeit even life itself rather than prolong such agonies. It is the misery which results from fear, not from contrition, that appals their hearts, and calls into existence those mis-termed upbraidings of conscience.

My experience of a Bushranger's courage has been anything but flattering to the class, of which the notorious one, (whom I shall instance,) was a member. I allude to the well-known George Wilson, who unmolested infested the northern districts for five or six years, than whom a more arrant coward I never met; although I confess to having been stopped and robbed by him, and will mention two or three of the remarkable feats, for the like of which he obtained the credit of being a surprising man, and a bold and accomplished Bushranger.

In many respects Wilson's career differed widely from that of most of his fraternity. He had the peculiar fortune of finding a few stanch comrades who were true, and numerous friends to harbour him, in whose hands his life was safe, in spite of the heavy reward offered for his apprehension; but it by no means follows that he derived any enjoyment from this good faith in guilty fellowship; on the contrary,

it is well known that he never ceased to dread the consequences of the wide-spread knowledge of his haunts, which resulted from these apparently favourable circumstances, and that he ever regarded with intense anxiety the disposition of his companions in iniquity. The bugbear of his life was treachery, although, in fact, his friends through life were stanch and true; and as a consequence of this miserable mistrust, his robberies, with few exceptions, were planned and executed single-handed; no one of his party knowing where he was or what he was doing.

His plan of robbery was very safe and simple, and one which I think will be admitted, required but little personal courage to practice; indeed, exclusive of the danger of detection, nothing could be more easy and secure. His custom was to select some large tree within a few feet of the road, behind which, after having duly secured his horse in the nearest neighbouring gully, he would carefully bestow himself in quest of prey. His arms were usually a double-barrelled fowling-piece, and one or two pairs of horse pistols: his gun, however, was all sufficient for the occasion, and even that weapon was seldom required to be brought into active service. No doubt he mostly took measures to ascertain who was likely to travel along the particular road which he selected, and it is believed that he generally obtained important information, not only as to the amount of property which his expected client carried, but as to his likelihood to yield or defend the same. Perhaps, however, a brief narration of how he robbed me will best illustrate the details of his method of proceeding.

My first introduction to Mr. Wilson was at an inn at

Armidale, in the district of New England. Happening, as was my custom, to go into the stable rather late at night, to see to what ostlers call the "supping up" of my horse, I perceived a little loose-made man, with a keen and anxious-looking eye, bestowing particular attention upon that quadruped; he did not observe my entrance into the stable, and as I always prided myself upon my judgment in horse-flesh, I watched his careful scrutiny and elaborate examination of all the animal's points with tolerable complacency, perfectly unconscious, of course, that he had the remotest idea of appropriating it to his own use without consulting my wishes in the matter. When he appeared to have satisfied himself in detail, and had drawn back from the stall to take a general comprehensive view of his *tout ensemble*, and when I fancied I perceived that he seemed perfectly satisfied that the horse was a really sound and valuable beast, I stepped forward, and with modest confidence enquired his opinion upon the subject of his inspection. At once I perceived that my new acquaintance was an exceedingly (not to say ridiculously) nervous man. If I had caught him in the act of running away with, instead of admiring the horse, he could hardly have been more disconcerted. He stammered out something apologetic, murmured a few words about good points, but to all my eloquence on the transcendant merits of my much-valued steed I found him otherwise as dumb as if he had never seen a horse before in his life. I remember mentioning to the ostler my impression that the man was a fool, to which that individual's only reply was a most elaborate wink, the significance of which telegraphic response being, of course,

capable of any interpretation, raised that professional gentleman considerably in my estimation.

On the following morning, at a little after daybreak, I had the satisfaction of seeing the fellow depart, and he was riding a beast that fully justified my opinion as to his want of judgment in the matter of horseflesh; a more worthless hack I had rarely had the misfortune to see.

An hour or two afterwards I proceeded on my way, having happily forgotten all about everything but a few particular matters which concerned me personally miles away, and on the subject of which I was diverting the tedium of a solitary Bush ride by a little aerial castle building, when—"Stop!" shouted somebody with startling emphasis, within half a dozen yards of me; and upon looking up, as soon as the shying of my nag would permit of my attention being turned to this unceremonious challenge, I beheld the muzzle of a double-barrelled gun within a few feet of my head.

"Stop!" re-shouted the invisible owner of the gun,—which, by the way, seeing that I had already complied with his demand, was a very unnecessary injunction,—however, it sounded authoritative, and seemed very well as an introductory admonition to dismount, to tie up my horse to a neighbouring tree, and to strip myself at an adjoining bush according to particular and very arbitrary directions. It was in vain that I demurred to any of these propositions, or attempted to argue the point with my unseen antagonist, the muzzle of the gun was in such disagreeable proximity to my ear. Once only I thought of my pistols with a view to resistance, but a conviction of the utter absurdity of attempting to unbutton my patent leather holsters to get at

them, when there was a man behind a tree, within six feet of me, taking a deliberate aim at my skull with a double-barrelled gun, struck me so forcibly, that I felt my only chance was coolness and stratagem; but even these would not do, and I was obliged, after repeated threats of instant dissolution, to dismount and do what I was ordered. I tied up my horse to the appointed tree, and walked to the point indicated,—all the time under the cover of the gun,—when I was ordered to strip; this I contended against for a long time; indeed until I thought it no longer safe to do so, for my unknown antagonist behind the tree waxed so unreasonably wroth at my very natural objection to uncovering myself, that I thought he would have exploded with the violence of his cursing; so at last I doffed my coat and waistcoat, and resolved to strip no further even for Father Peter. Another verbal fight in consequence ensued; he swore and I swore, and the gun got tremulous with rage,—at last, in dogged determination to die any how rather than *sans culottes*, I threw myself upon the ground, which puzzling him what to do, he yielded the point, and forth from his shelter stepped my stable acquaintance of the preceding evening,

"Hallo, my man!" said I, as patronisingly as circumstances would permit; "hallo! what do you want?"

"What do I want?" he replied; "why, your money and that there horse of yours, to be sure; what else d'ye think I want?"

He made this reply, I must observe, under such an obvious fit of fear and trembling, that I was fain to again request that he would be kind enough either to keep his

finger from the trigger of his gun, or divert its muzzle from my head; but he turned a deaf ear to my entreaties, and walked up to my heap of cast-off clothes, calling out incessantly "lie down!" as if he had mistaken my wearing apparel for "game," and *me* for the "pointer dog," that had indicated to him their whereabouts.

"My dear fellow!" said I, "make yourself perfectly welcome to all you can find there, but for God's sake take care what you're doing, or you'll shoot me with that infernal weapon of yours."

"Lie down!" said he, wholly indifferent to my trepidation lest I should be murdered by accident by his frightful nervousness; so down in despair I laid, and as I fortunately had not much money about me, *(never had)* I had not a great deal of care about the rifling of my pockets which ensued; but the idea of the blackguard's taking my beautiful horse was very distressing; however, there was no help for it, so I endeavoured to pass it off as a joke, the effect of which,—as he had now secured my pistols, and felt himself rather more at ease,—so won upon the esteem of my quondam acquaintance that, after having mounted my horse and looked to the priming of what had so lately been my firearms, he condescended to favour me with an expression of his flattering opinion, complimented me with an especial introduction to himself by name; and, as a mark of great kindness, told me where I might find his horse—if I could catch him—and putting spurs to my gallant steeple-chaser, he darted into the Bush, and was soon lost to sight.

I quickly reassumed my rifled apparel, and moved

mechanically towards the horse, with which I had been so considerately favoured in exchange for mine; and sure enough I soon found a beast that made me feel ashamed of myself when I took possession of him; he was one of the most ill-favoured hacks to look at that I ever remember to have seen; but, according to the old saying, he was "a rum one to go," so with what speed I could command I returned, for the purpose of endeavouring, by the aid of the police, to recover my stolen property. Had I known the police of that day better, I might have saved myself the trouble of going near them. My horse returned to the station some six months afterwards—a broken-down, ruined animal—having been ridden nearly to death, and starved into the bargain; but, bad as he was, it was the only portion of my lost treasures which I ever recovered.

This adventure proved to me, beyond the possibility of doubt, the folly of which I had been guilty in carrying weapons of defence against attacks like these, and particularly of carrying them so carefully fastened up in my holsters, that it would have been impossible to make use of them under two or three minutes' preparation; but in the present sort of emergency, had I even carried them in my hand, they could hardly have been serviceable against a man concealed behind a tree, within a few feet of me, and who could (and would I doubt not) have shot me in a moment, if he had seen that I was so prepared. In fact, I was so convinced of the futility of resistance, that I have never since travelled with firearms; for I confess that of all my reminiscences of this adventure, the thought that in spite of being armed for resistance, I was robbed even of my

weapons, has always risen up before me as the most disagreeable.

But to shew that I have not been singular in this respect, the circumstance of Wilson's robbing two armed and mounted policemen, who were in search of him, will be sufficient illustration. The *modus operandi* of this transaction was apparently very similar to that of my own case. It is reported that Wilson was on the look out behind a tree for some stray traveller to pillage, was startled at beholding two mounted troopers approaching; and as these were not the sort of travellers with whom he desired to make acquaintance, he planted himself carefully out of sight. It happened, however, that one of the policemen had a little dog of the Skye terrier breed, a rough and wiry little beast, who enjoyed considerable celebrity from his reputation in the destruction of vermin; and as the road wound round pretty close to the trysting tree, the hunting predilections of this sporting pup led him to inspect the object which his keen sense of smell immediately detected; when, as might have been expected from such a cantankerous animal, he at once fell to work at Mr. Wilson's undefended legs, snapping and barking at them ferociously.

The troopers, thinking of course that some sort of sport was on foot,—a bandicoote, or snake, or some kind of game, upon which to let off a little of their latent destructiveness, proceeded to dismount that they might the more fully participate in its enjoyment, when to their astonishment they found themselves suddenly confronted by the muzzle of a double-barrelled gun, and called upon to "stand," on peril of their lives; for Wilson, finding that detection was inevi-

table from the men's approach, was driven to the desperate alternative of taking them or rendering himself their prisoner. And his attempt was, as in my case, successful; resistance appeared to them to be useless; their arms were very carefully bestowed upon their saddles, beyond their reach, and Wilson had the high satisfaction of robbing them of all they possessed, sinking their carbines and saddles in a water-hole, turning their horses adrift into the Bush, and leaving them to pursue their way on foot, and half naked to report themselves at head-quarters as two of the most remarkably ill-used thief-takers on record: and rumour adds that their personal appearance, and the lugubrious report of their unfortunate encounter was highly entertaining. Still, I absolutely deny that Wilson was, in any sense of the term, a brave man; fighting with a halter round his neck, who would not be desperate?—proverbially, a worm when trod on turns to bite. My personal interviews with Wilson on two occasions revealed him to me as a ridiculously nervous man; rid him of his shelter, under cover of which he attacked, and he was a helpless trembling coward. My second encounter with him, when he was well armed and well mounted, and I was in my shirt sleeves, on an old stock horse, armed with nothing but my heavy whip, exposed him to me in his true character. We met suddenly, miles away from any road or human habitation, and his first impulse was flight; but before he could nerve himself even to this activity we were side by side, and had thief-taking been a part of my profession, I have no doubt but unarmed as I was I could have made him unresistingly my prisoner. He was surprised completely out of his power of

action; in fact, helplessly frightened by the suddenness of the encounter so far from where he expected to see any one, and a child might have taken him, and I had the satisfaction of seeing that he felt himself utterly powerless, and of ascertaining from his own confession, when I had rallied him into something like physical capacity, that he "really was so taken aback that I might have knocked him down with a feather:" however, as I did not happen to have a feather about me, that slender means of flooring a Bushranger was never tried, but in his unguarded trepidation I discovered his haunts, his comrades, and his plans, and the next week he paid the extreme mortal penalty for his manifold offences.

A detachment of mounted (military) police had just arrived, despatched for the sole purpose of his capture. His haunts were searched, his tracks found, and with the aid of a black boy he was followed for several days, and overtaken at an encampment on the Rocky River, a tributary of the Clarence, where again he distinguished himself for that which is accounted to him for bravery. He found himself and party opposed to an unequal force: escape was impossible, and death, if he were taken, inevitable. His only possible chance, therefore, was to fight, and his only chance was instant death by risking this attempt, or death by the hangman's hands if he surrendered. It is no wonder that he chose the former alternative, hopeless and desperate as it was, and he died, after a bloody struggle on both sides, by the hand of the serjeant who commanded this brave and resolute detachment of police, leaving a name behind him which, although stained by many a heinous crime, has been foolishly divested of its due degree of shame by a false

and infatuated admiration of the very much too highly estimated quality of bravery; and to which attribute, in reality, Wilson had no claim: and I have little doubt but that he may safely be regarded as a very fair sample of his class in his particular.

No. 11.—ODDS AND ENDS.

LIFE IN THE BUSH.

Life in the Bush of Australia is usually marked by alternate extremes of dullness and excitement. It necessarily, under its most favourable auspices, entails much solitude, and exclusion from the social converse of one's fellows too often engenders habits of sloth and self-indulgent carelessness. Upon a "Station," however, there is no occasion for idleness at any time; seasons of necessary activity need never be replaced by periods of perfect idleness, as has been too commonly the case. There is always plenty of means of employment if the requisite inclination existed; but among other disadvantages which the Bush has for many years afforded, the power of making money rapidly and easily has been one which has acted most perniciously, in checking the development of our vast resources, encouraging, as it has ever done, an apathy of mind, which leads to a listless indifference to the natural advantages with which we are surrounded. So completely, however, in the lapse of a few years, does this depressing influence act,—even upon once well-regulated minds,—that, incredible although it may appear, there are very many Squatters, even now who, although devoured by *ennui* for months and months together, have never mustered resolution enough to form a

garden, or to farm any portion of the miles of rich and fertile soil by which they are surrounded. For not farming they have in years past found the plausible excuse that it saved nothing,—it did not pay on account of the scarcity and dearness of labour. But for not gardening,—even overlooking the delight of the occupation,—for not even growing so much as a potatoe or a cabbage, to diversify the daily fare of beef and damper, or mutton and damper, there could be no such flattering unction applied. It has been indolence, in one of its most disgusting forms, and nothing else, which has caused this relapse towards barbarism.

A Squatter's home, with few exceptions therefore, presented a few years back a deplorable picture of rudeness, indolence, and waste, opposed to all the usages of civilized life, and in marked and pitiable contrast with the perhaps once highly-cultivated but now neglected mind and manners of its smoking, drinking, and dirt-begrimed owner. These things have latterly very much improved; the civilizing influence of female society has diffused itself through the remotest of these secluded spots, and the decencies, comforts, and refinements of domestic life have in many instances superseded the rough and reckless habits which seemed at one time to have been considered essential to a genuine Bushman's character. The Squatter's slab and bark-roofed hut no longer necessarily stands in naked solitude upon the margin of some bleak and desolate plain; sweet sheltered nooks, and neat and well-built cottages, with gardens stocked with fruits and flowers, surrounded by cultivated fields with wheat, and corn, and vegetables, are rapidly increasing in number and esteem. The miserable "stretcher" and the

three-legged stool (relics of bygone barbarism,) are fast giving place to less primitive notions of household furniture. The abominable tin pannican and the old black pipe, the Guernsey frock, the coarse huge boots and greasy moleskin nether garments, are yielding visibly to the spirit of improvement; and modern Squatters, in spite of their moustachioed lips and bearded chins, may really now be sometimes recognised as Christian gentlemen,—an identity which within the period of my Bush experience, could hardly have been generally admitted even by their most ardent admirers.

SNAKES.

There are in New South Wales, and particularly in its northern districts, a great variety of Snakes; black, brown, green, yellow, carpet, spotted, and diamond Snakes, most of which I believe to be deadly venomous. Some people profess to be very sagacious on this subject, but I confess to such an instinctive repugnance to these reptiles, as to deter me from taking any further interest in them than that of getting out of their way as much as possible. The venomous portion, (or *Crotalida,*) I am told, may be distinguished from such as are innocuous by their having a poison-bag concealed in their mouths, into which the roots of their movable poison-fangs are attached; and you have only to catch one and carefully open its mouth with your finger and thumb, to satisfy yourself of this important fact;—they may also be distinguished from any of the numerous and much-abused families of *Coluberidæ*, by laying hold of the tail of one of each description, in order that you may test their

respective degrees of flexibility, the genuine *Colubræ* being able to make his head reach his tail, so as to bite you, which, it is affirmed, the venomous reptile is unable to accomplish; but as it always occurred to me that the operation of handling a snake, either to test its amount of flexibility, or for the purpose of examining its poison-fangs, was one which might be attended with considerable danger, I have preferred taking these very interesting circumstances on credit, rather than attempting to verify them by a personal inspection.

The black fellows are very careful, not to say afraid, of snakes in general; they nevertheless make frequent hearty meals off their carcases, when one of their own tribe has *properly* caught them; but on no account will they touch one unless so caught, for it is understood that the venomous snake, when wounded, bites itself, and not unfrequently dies from the effect of its own poison. How far this would affect a person who ate of their flesh I am not competent to say; the blacks, however, like myself, decline making the experiment.

The *proper* mode of killing them, if they are designed for edible purposes, is to sneak upon them armed with a forked stick, so as to pin the creature's neck close to its head fast to the ground. This the Natives contrive very scientifically, whilst they perform the delicate operation of decapitation, which requires to be done in a moment, and of course before the reptile has managed to wound itself, a malicious operation which it endeavours to effect with a zeal and determination worthy of a better cause. Of course my long residence in the Bush deadened in

great degree the feeling of shuddering disgust with which at first I always regarded these accursed reptiles, but it has never totally eradicated that sensation. Many people, however, regard them with anything but fear or disgust, albeit, like myself, they lose no opportunity of destroying them: some indeed, I have heard, go so far as to approve of them as ornamental additions to their gardens, but I am happy to say that my own acquaintance does not include any of such curious connoisseurs. A relative of mine, however, often indulges himself by catching them by the tail, and holding them suspended by that part, he can then by a judicious shake always apparently prevent their turning upon him (whether *colubers* or not); in fact, he seems to shake them out at pleasure, like those toy snakes which children delight in, every time they try to turn; but to me, who have been only a spectator of this amusement, it was always a disagreeable exhibition to see him holding out these noisome things by the tail, whilst they, twisting and writhing in his hand, vainly endeavoured to inflict a wound, the merest scratch of which would most probably have been fatal. There is no accounting for taste; my pastimes have, however, been usually directed into less hazardous channels, and my adventures with snakes, of which I have had several, have never been either voluntary or agreeable: in fact, "*Latet anguis in herbâ*" was always a suggestive piece of information sufficient to make me exceedingly uncomfortable, whether that unpleasant suggestion was conveyed literally or figuratively; and I scarcely know even now which of the two forms is the more dangerous or disagreeable.

HOW TO MAKE A RIVER.

In geological hypotheses the mind is usually called upon to grasp such immense contingencies of time and space, that anything short of a very large organ of veneration fails to attain implicit faith in such vast consequences. This is often especially exemplified in the theories respecting the important agencies of air and water, in changing the face of a country;—here, however, it is no uncommon sight to perceive vast natural changes effected in a very short space of time. The same, I presume, may be observed in most new countries: for example, the formation of a large creek or river, which is generally supposed to be an important affair, is an occurrence often to be observed. I have seen the commencement and completion of more than two or three of these in a very few years, and I have no doubt that most residents in the interior of this or like countries must have witnessed similar phenomena.

The process of *making a River*, on many parts of our flat county, seems to need but a beginning, which the accidental agency of civilized man appears to have been destined to afford. It would be impossible to say what ages may have passed, or what storms innumerable may have flooded many of these inland valley flats: no trace nor indication whatever of a water-course has been the result; the floods appear to have covered all equally, but to no great depth, and to have been again absorbed, or in their own good time, evaporated.

I do not here allude to any of the several lakes, now dry, which, within the recollection of very many of the present

generation of colonists were deep and extensive reservoirs of water; for these lakes may again fill as the cycle of seasons changes, unless, as many persons predict, the colony is to remain permanently subject to drought. This problem, however, remains to be developed, and in no way affects the drainage to which I allude, from the high, flat, swampy lands from which so many of our rivers spring. Upon these swamps it is abundantly evident water has long remained, and that the only means by which these waters were formerly dispelled was by evaporation, until some accidental abrasion of the soil,—generally a drag route,—has served as the primary means of collecting the neighbouring waters, which soon drain thitherward from all around, and flow on, gathering force and bulk as they proceed. The process here requires a little assistance from resistance, and this is most commonly furnished in the shape of a hard stone, or the root of a tree, which forms a sort of miniature waterfall. At this point the gathered waters chafe, cutting for themselves at the base a face in the opposite bank of the abrasure, deepening and widening the cut, according to the rush of water, from a few inches to several feet, and continuing the process with increasing force until under favourable auspices the small drag track soon swells out to a considerable drain, and storm by storm increases in magnitude, until it assumes the well-defined characteristics of a creek, bearing its waters to some larger stream, or carrying them unaided to the nearest main outlet to the sea.

I had seen so many of these creeks formed by accidental abrasures of the soil,—had intimately known several

tracts of uninhabited country, where there was no sign of a creek, nor any—even the smallest—water-channel, but which, when inhabited, had four or five years subsequently been well drained by large and well defined rivulets; that having upon my own "run" one of those elevated basins so common to the country, which, in time of flood, became a huge lagoon, and rendered a large tract of land perfectly useless for sheep-farming purposes,—I determined to try my hand at this simple and inexpensive process of river manufacture. Accordingly I took a drag to the spot, and driving it across its spungy surface, from the extreme circle of the upper part towards the centre, in five or six places, to gather the waters as much as possible to a point, from which, to the apparently easiest outlet to the falling country at its lower edge, I ran the drag tracks in one course as deeply as I could; and I had the satisfaction of seeing, at no distant day, that my efforts had been attended with perfect success. The lagoon is now thoroughly drained and available for sheep; and the creek is a very pretty little specimen of amateur river-making on a small scale. One of these aqueducts, in particular, I remember to have traced from its source, a mere dray track, over an extent of thirty miles; in some parts of which it had forced its way through very rough and broken country, undermined rocks, cut through hills, and plunged down precipitous falls until, in places, its magnitude, both of width and depth, and in flood-time the bulk of foaming water in its channel would almost have entitled it to the dignity of being called a river. And all this vast change occurred within my own observation, in a space of five or

six years. Who then shall pretend to estimate the immense effect of numerous and successive drainages like these, upon not only the climate and fertility of the country, but on the geological peculiarities which strike the observant traveller at every stage of his investigations?

Upon a country, the soil of which very generally requires an ample irrigation to fertilise it, such causes must, of course, exercise great influence; but on a more extended view of the many almost incontrovertible indications of a former and widely-changed condition of this great continent—of the necessarily superior elevation then attained by its mountains, hills, and table lands—of the then actual, as well as relative, depression of its lakes and valleys; of its innumerable but unmistakeable variations of level; its present peculiar atmospherical phenomena, and its undeniable change of climate from the extreme of moist to dry; the effect of continued drainages like these must evidently be of far greater moment than might appear from the mere temporary effects which result directly from their operations.

Most people, I am aware, look upon a well-drained country as a blessing; but in Australia, from the irresistible inferences to be deduced from such evidences as those above alluded to, we have much more to apprehend from drought, and arid sterility, than from any excess of moisture; and I fear that if, in addition to the natural revolutions of condition and climate, our more extensive farming operations should induce a systematic drainage of these inland swamps, the country will be seriously injured; for, as far as my experience of a very

large area of it extends, the supply of all our rivers, large or small, appears to be from swamps on the high lands whence they arise, and which, if once drained for agricultural purposes, the rivers—at present ill-supplied with water,—will be entirely dried up. So important does this subject appear to me, that I am seriously disposed to think it one with which it should not be beneath the attention of the Government to interfere, for the purpose of adopting stringent measures to preserve these swampy reservoirs of that most essential element, water, and for averting as far as possible the innumerable evils which a short or limited supply will entail upon the whole country and community.

LOST IN THE BUSH.

That is a dreary and miserable sensation which is experienced at perceiving one's self to be lost, even in a crowded city, or upon a well-marked thoroughfare; but the paralysing sense of fear and utter desolation which accompany the fact of being lost, can hardly be felt so thoroughly as when that accident occurs in the forests of a wild and scarcely-inhabited country. Yet being lost in the Bush is a circumstance of very common occurrence with young and inexperienced settlers in Australia. The art peculiar to the Bushman, of navigating the intricacies of the trackless wildernesses of trees and scrubs, and broken mountain passes, which constitute what is known by the name of "Bush," being one of those mysteries which nothing but practice can unravel; and which no theory, or descriptive illustration, can teach; there are even very many persons who may pass their lives in the

Bush without attaining facility in this peculiar kind of pioneering. On the other hand, there are others who, by a species of instinct (very remarkable in most of the Australian aborigines, and in many of the inferior animals) at once become at home, and at their ease, even among the ranges of the most broken and difficult country.

I had an Irish immigrant once, who hired himself as a stockman, (albeit he never crossed a horse in his life,) and could not return along the main road by the way he had gone without losing himself; and I have had others who, take them where you would, even by the most circuitous route, never seemed to lose a consciousness of their relative position with respect to home; but, like a needle pointing to the magnet, could steer straight, as the nature of the country would admit, back to the spot whence they proceeded. A similar diversity of this faculty is observable even away from the forests and mountains where conspicuous features in the surrounding scenery might be supposed to guide the observant eye or indicate the track. On several occasions I have travelled with Bushmen of this class on wide unbounded plains, where not a tree, hill, or landmark of any description afforded assistance as to the course we were pursuing; and with the precision of a compass they have been able to direct the way, and never once be baffled or misled by mist or rain, or any other cause, from maintaining the straight direction, which a wonderful instinct assured them was correct. And on the contrary, once, when camped with a flock of sheep upon an open plain, I had shot a bustard, which fell about a quarter of a mile from the camp, the man I sent for it

having unfortunately occasion, before he caught the bird, to turn about once or twice, found, when he at length succeeded, that he had not the remotest idea where he was, and accordingly, shouldering his game, he started off exactly in a contrary direction to that which would have brought him back; and I had the greatest difficulty (for it was coming on dark) to get one of my horses in time to succeed in overtaking him before he had begun to adopt the zigzag mode of progression which is usually resorted to by persons in the first bewilderment, by discovering that they are lost.

My own experiences of mistakes of this kind have been very unimportant, but I have frequently met in the Bush with parties who have been wandering, lost, through its mazes for several days, and fortunately, too, in time to relieve their distress.

On one of these occasions I met with a poor lad, who had been upwards of a week in this deplorable condition, without food, or the means of procuring fire; although he was surrounded by stations, and had actually never been at any time of his wandering more than five miles away. The unfortunate fellow was, of course, one of those unfavoured geniuses who happened to be very inefficiently endowed with the organ of locality, and being once adrift, he appeared to have resigned the use of most of the other of his faculties to the influence of terror or despair. He related to me, with an air of pride, the scientific plan he had adopted for overcoming the difficulties of his situation; but added, with a kind of vexed wonderment, that he could not at all make out how it was that his plan had not succeeded.

I found him an excellent illustration of the truth of the remark, that "a little learning is a dangerous thing," for only just remembering sufficient of the rudiments of astronomy acquired at school, to be conscious that the sun rose in the east, he resolved upon applying this important acquisition of knowledge to his own deliverance, by shaping out a straight course in one particular and continuous direction; but, unluckily, he forgot that the sun, although in the habit of rising in the east, sets just as constantly in the west; and so, by following from morning till night this guiding light of his intelligence, the orbit he described became upon the whole somewhat eccentric. It appeared further from his revelations that, in the course of his weekly ellipses, he had several times crossed a road,—doubtless the same road over and over again,—and although not unconscious that a road must necessarily lead to or from somewhere, so bent was he upon the prosecution of his one idea of following the sun, that he would not be diverted from his purpose, even by the evident means of relief suggested by the sight of a road,—particularly, as he innocently observed, he could not possibly know where a strange road led to, but was quite certain of being all right in following the well-known course of the sun. The poor fellow's bewilderment, when the cause of his ill-success was explained to him, was ludicrous in the extreme.

Of course, any person not divested of his senses, would, if lost, follow the first road he should be fortunate enough to find; but roads being very scarce in some parts of the interior, it is a good general rule to follow down the nearest water-course, creek, or river; for, with scarcely an excep-

tion, the squatting stations and huts in every part of the country are placed upon the banks of creeks or water-courses, and sooner or later, therefore, this manner of proceeding is sure to bring you to a station. But even this will not do for some people; for I once found the valuable Irish stockman before alluded to half drowned and suffering under a severe fit of ague, from having adopted a too literal interpretation of this very simple direction, and endeavoured to make his way home down the centre of the stream; which, being unable to swim, and happening at night, in the depth of a New England winter, was very nearly putting a termination to the interesting creature's eccentricities. So wonderful an amount of stupidity may perhaps be regarded doubtfully. I aver, however, that it is an actual fact, although had I been otherwise than an eye-witness to it, I could really not have ventured upon recording so apparently incredible an amount of persevering wrong-headedness.

No. 12.

THE GOLD FIELDS OF AUSTRALIA.

THEIR DISCOVERY, PROSPECTS, AND PROBABLE EXTENT.

THE position of New South Wales, at the moment of the discovery of extensive Gold Fields in the interior, was one of very peculiar significance. Not that the colonists had failed to struggle through the Slough of Despond, which their reckless speculations prior to the year 1844 had so largely engendered, nor had their indomitable energy been unsuccessful in winning for themselves wealth and good name, by their since sounder commercial policy, and the more systematic prosecution of their growing industrial pursuits. In these particulars they had been eminently successful. It is, however, to the moral and political position of the colony that I more immediately refer, as presenting at this important crisis so peculiar an aspect.

On the one hand, threatened with a renewal of that more than moral pestilence—Transportation,—and the dismemberment of one of the fairest portions of her territory (Moreton Bay) the land throughout resounded with indignant, and almost unanimous remonstrance and reproach; whilst, on the other hand, endowed with a new constitution, and her sphere of local action enlarged by added powers of legislation, she was rapidly acquiring a position of importance, and assuming to herself a degree of political independence, which bade fair to combat every error of Imperial Legislation, and to resist, even to the uttermost,

the impending infliction of transportation. Appeal after appeal, remonstrance after remonstrance, had failed apparently to arouse the sympathies of her distant rulers, or to inspire them with a spirit of kindlier conciliation: and murmured threats, and gathering discontent, were spreading far and wide, when, lo! the cry went forth of "Gold upon our Western Cordillera!" and every thought and feeling for a time gave place to the absorbing fascination of that golden spell. An unnatural excitement seized upon the entire community, each man hurried about from place to place, scarce knowing why; commercial people met on their various business avocations, but thought and talked of gold alone; their less active-minded and humble neighbours flocked together in crowds at corners of streets, and in the bye-ways of the town and suburbs, and staring at each other in dubious amazement, thought and marvelled at this golden epoch; the veritable "Good time coming" promised to the poor; and talked in vague uncertain language, of gold fields, diggings, nuggets, and the like, until the fabled reign of PLUTUS, to their wealth-struck minds, seemed all but already realised.

In fact, innumerable visions of huge heaps of glittering gold alike disturbed the active business of the day, and haunted the broken slumbers of the restless night. On Saturday, May 3rd, 1851—(that ever-memorable month, which marks the industrial emulation of the civilised world, and pledges its fraternity)—it was first publicly announced in the leading journals of the colony, that gold in considerable abundance had been discovered in our western districts, near the large and flourishing inland

town of Bathurst: and that it had been so discovered as far back as the 12th of February preceding, by Mr. Edward Hammond Hargraves, a resident of Brisband Water, lately returned to the colony from California, and who, guided by his observations of a marked apparent similarity between the gold-yielding portions of that celebrated country, and the geological formation of the Bathurst and Wellington districts, (with which he had formerly been familiar,) was induced to make careful search among these auriferous indications for the precious deposit which he thus shrewdly conjectured might be found there. His investigations were attended with a success surpassing his most sanguine expectations. These results were for a considerable time concealed from the public. The Government, however, had very properly been apprised of the discovery of the enormous field of wealth thus suddenly opened up, and experimental investigations as to its productiveness, and the probable profit of its working, were, during the period of temporary concealment, officially and conclusively ascertained. Mr. Stutchbury, (1.)

(1.) EXTRACT FROM A REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT GEOLOGIST—In the water-courses I have found or had shown to me the following gems, but from their small size were not of any value.

TOPAZES.—White.

GARNETS.—Almandine.

DITTO.—Epidote.

RUBIES.—Two varieties, the Spinelle Ruby and the Balas Ruby.

SAPPHIRES.—Three varieties: Light Blue (Salamstein), Dark Blue, and the Asteria or Star Sapphire.

CHRYSOBERYL.—

CHRYSOLITE.—And its variety, Olivine Brown Rock Crystal.

CAIRNGORM.—

Since writing the foregoing, I have seen a small but beautifully crystallised Diamond, from the Turon River.

the Government Geologist, proceeded to the spot, and bore prompt testimony to the existence and extent of the reported discovery. Arrangements were then immediately initiated to meet the important consequences so certain to result from a public announcement of these startling particulars—an announcement no longer to be withheld, for rumour had began to whisper forth, in tones of confident assurance, its garbled and exaggerated versions of the approaching intelligence; and on Saturday, the 3rd of May, as before stated, the full information broke upon our astonished community with bewildering and indescribable effect.

This beautiful and fruitful country was thus apparently at once to cast off the depressing influence of its original penal character. Its vast magnitude and real importance were at once and loudly to be proclaimed. Its demands for justice, and attention to its political rights, were no longer to be despised, or lightly entertained;—a golden era opened out before us—a better land seemed rising visibly before our eyes; not perhaps that "better land" which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,—so beautifully and poetically apostrophised by Mrs. Hemans, but a realisation of that better land, the ideal shore of her dreaming and gentle boy:—

"Where the feathery palm-trees rise,
And the date grows ripe under sunny skies;
Or 'midst the green islands of glittering seas,
Where fragrant forests perfume the breeze,
And strange bright birds, on their starry wings,
Bear the rich hues of all glorious things.

Far away in some region old,
Where the rivers wander o'er sands of gold;
Where the burning rays of the ruby shine,
And the diamond lights up the secret mine,
And the pearl gleams forth from the coral strand."

Such are the charms of our "better land," exhibited in every feature of that glowing picture which I have thus presumed to mutilate for the purpose of a beautiful and apt illustration of the wealth of this favoured country; for close upon the discovery of gold followed also those of the precious stones here so poetically enumerated. The diamond, ruby, and sapphire, are found in the New England, Bathurst, and Wellington districts: beautiful specimens of pearl, at Moreton Bay; and the coral reefs off our northern coasts are of immense extent, and furnish to the adventurous seeker beautiful and valuable specimens.

The honour of the first discovery of the existence of our gold became, immediately upon its announcement, a matter of contention. One scientific gentleman, a Fellow of the Geological Society of London, disputing with Mr. Hargraves that distinction, on the grounds that gold had, long prior to the date of the present discovery, been found in small specimens by the earliest convict inhabitants of the colony, the facts of which, however, were not at the time, for obvious reasons, permitted to transpire; and that in addition to the very careful series of geological deductions, by which he had arrived at the undoubted conclusion, that gold must exist in considerable abundance here; he had himself, as far back as the year 1841, as he states in a very interesting pamphlet compiled for the occasion—"brought gold from the very basin of the river now supplying it (the Macquarie;) this gold was exhibited to members of Government, and of the Legislature in the Council Chamber itself, and to numbers of persons in the community, who have testified to the fact; it was

spoken of openly, it was discussed in public journals, it was made the ground of inquiries conducted on scientific principles, and backed by occasional additional proofs, it was openly declared that gold exists in considerable abundance in our schists and quartzites; and further, the very region was pointed out, in which it would be found."

It was upon these grounds, and in the words quoted, that that gentleman disputed the honour of the first discovery, "not seeking," as he further says, "to draw any comparison between his own convictions and the experience of others: the fact he would insist on is, that it was left for one, who makes no profession of geological science, but who had been in California, and by dint of observation, perseverance, and a series of fortunate accidents, was enabled to arouse attention to excite the people to explore the very region long and previously proclaimed as abundant in gold."

To my judgment, the respective merits of this discovery are based upon such opposite claims, that it appears difficult not to perceive at once how due to each may be the credit claimed without detraction from the other. The undoubted merit of having first exhibited these indications, of having shewn, by actual working, the profit and practical value of these auriferous deposits, cannot, of course, be fairly denied to Mr. Hargraves. That gentleman's own statement of the circumstances leading to the discovery, will perhaps best illustrate this portion of the subject: he says—"The simple truth is, that about sixteen years since I travelled over the gold country in Australia, without the remotest idea that I should ever see it again; the features,

and to a limited extent the geology of the country, made an impression on my mind which eventually led me to the present discovery. During my recent travels in California, I had ample opportunities of observing the features of that country; the similarity between the country I had visited sixteen years ago, and the country in which thousands and tens of thousands were then busily employed extracting the precious metal, struck me very forcibly, so much so, that it took possession of my mind day and night, and I resolved, with the blessing of Providence, to visit the locality immediately on my return to New South Wales. I mentioned my belief of the existence of gold in the colony to several of my most esteemed and sincere friends upon my return, and my resolve to make a personal search under any privation. From the best and kindest motives, they endeavoured to dissuade me from the enterprize, and even held out pecuniary motives that, under ordinary circumstances, would have been too powerful to withstand; but feeling that I could not rest until I had satisfied my mind by a personal search, I went through hundreds of miles of the solitary wilderness, and having made the discovery, disclosed it to the Colonial Government, who may or may not reward me for the unbounded wealth which I have, through an over-ruling Providence, been the humble instrument of conferring on my fellow-colonists.

Mr. Hargraves further declares, that he was in no way encouraged in the prosecution, or directed to the particular locality of this gold discovery, by writings or statements of any person whatsoever, and those who—like myself,—have the happiness of Mr. Hargraves' acquaintance, need no

further assurance of the perfect truth of this statement. Whatever credit, therefore, may attach to the scientific inferences as to the particular regions where gold "would be found,"—the value of the practical observation and diligent search which ultimately demonstrated its existence, and proved its high commercial value and immense extent, is by no means thus to be depreciated;—and the honour of the first discovery, to all useful intents and purposes, belongs of right to Mr. Hargraves; and it is pleasing to observe, that an appreciation of this service has not been neglected by Government, to whom he so properly in the first instance communicated the important secret of his success; nor have his fellow-colonists been altogether unmindful of the debt due to his enterprize. But on behalf of the claims put forth by science to this discovery, it must be remembered, that although Mr. Hargraves may never have heard or read of such particulars as those enumerated by Mr. Clark, yet many scientific gentlemen had nevertheless long entertained the opinion, that Australia would be found second to no country in the world in the richness and extent of its mineral wealth. The conspicuous resemblance between the geology of her eastern coast and that of the Ural mountains of Russia, had frequently been insisted on, and the very spot of Mr. Hargraves' successful search, distinctly specified. Sir Roderick Murchison, Sir C. Lemon, Count Stretzleckt, Colonel Helmerson, and other eminently scientific gentlemen, had long publicly proclaimed these highly-important facts. Sir R. Murchison distinctly recognizes, and expresses his knowledge of the actual existence of gold in Australia, in a letter to Sir C. Lemon, in the course of

which he writes thus :—" I now learn, however, that fine specimens of gold have been found in the western flank of the Australian Cordillera, particularly near the settlement of Bathurst, where it occurs in fragments composed of the same matrix (quartz,) as in the Ural." And again, " my friend and associate in the Imperial Academy at Petersburg, Colonel Helmersen, has recently suggested that a careful search for gold ore in the Australian debris, will, it is highly probable, lead to its detection in abundance. If, then, in the course of your statistical enquiries, you may know of any Government Cornish miner about to seek his fortune in Australia, be pleased to tell him to apply his knowledge of the mode of extracting his ore from his own gravel to the drift and debris on the flanks of the great north and south chain of Australia, or any smaller parallel ridge of that great country; for great indeed would be my pleasure to learn that, through the application of Cornish skill, such a region should be converted into a British El Dorado.

These confident opinions and well-authenticated facts,—not carefully secluded amongst the private correspondence of these distinguished gentlemen themselves, but published, and patent to the reading world,—assuredly determine the precise value of the claims of science to the honour of this grand discovery, and fully vindicate their assertion, although they do not in any way detract from the peculiar and subordinate merits of that persevering industry, which happily tended to their confirmation. And, indeed, in a comparison to such opposite claims of honour, the value of practical service can be hardly over estimated. The possible existence of a vast western continent across the waters of

the Atlantic Ocean was long a subject of speculation in the scientific coteries of Europe, but it needed the courage, patience, and practical observation of a Columbus finally to solve these vague anticipations, and to prove that country's actual existence.

There were not wanting in our community many who regarded this discovery of gold as an evil of most serious import. The same leading journal which first proclaimed the news, and subsequently drew such vivid pictures of the mighty benefits to result therefrom, at first regarded the existence of these mines of wealth as sources of unmitigated evil. "We are cursed with a gold field," was the first view taken of an event, the effects of which they subsequently most earnestly laboured to encourage and extol. And, indeed, the peculiar position of our population, the remnants of the convict class still numerous amongst us, and the frightful example of Californian excesses induce many to anticipate with dread the possibility of similar recurrences here. The immediate rush, too, of the labouring population to the spot of these discoveries —the almost utterly unprovided state in which they thrust themselves from house and home, to face the exposure of an English winter's climate, in their rabid thirst for gold —the complete desertion of all the ordinary occupations of life, both in town and country, and the panic price of every description of provisions, which simultaneously, but most unaccountably, took place—were, indeed, matters not altogether to be disregarded. They caused, undoubtedly, a serious temporary inconvenience to many; but the more important evils anticipated as the consequence of this sudden

and unnatural disorganisation of society have happily proved to be without a foundation; and it now seems almost incredible how so great a change of circumstances, so sudden and tremendous a social revolution, could have taken place, with so little serious consequence to the interests of society. No single instance of lawless excess, always excepting, of course, mere temporary ebullitions of inebriety, has yet disgraced the era of our gold discovery. This fact speaks volumes for the love of order that distinguishes the Australian colonists generally, and will be appreciated more particularly when their almost wholly unprotected and inefficiently controlled state is taken into consideration. With but a mere guard of soldiers in the entire colony, and a handful of inexperienced police, and these never needed, never even moved to the scene of this tremendous excitement—the colony has experienced and quietly conducted the operations of one of the most important trials to order and good government which it is possible to conceive; and the people, as a whole, with no power to force their obedience, with no adequate control beyond their own good conduct and habits of obedience to the law, have ever been found to render to the representatives of authority the most implicit deference and respect. Ponder upon this, all ye who sit at home at ease, and talk at random of the degraded social condition of the colonists! Think of this, all ye whose riots nothing less than blood could ever quell, and whose every social revolution has been the invariable signal for indiscriminate anarchy and confusion.

The comparisons instituted, however, between Australia

and California, and from which the fearful anticipations of indiscriminate violence and excess had been deduced, were neither justified by circumstances, nor, as will be perceived, founded upon a fair and reasonable consideration of the respective conditions of those countries. California, at the time of the discovery of her gold fields, was almost a wilderness, inhabited only by a few unsettled, reckless adventurers. Her geographical position and political circumstances facilitated the sudden importation of an immense and ill-assorted population, for the reception of which neither her social institutions, nor her agricultural nor commercial advancement, had in any way prepared her. The result was not difficult to anticipate; plague, pestilence, and famine, with murder, civil war, and every species of lawless vice and social disorder, reigned throughout the land.

In Australia, at the commencement of her golden era, the relative circumstances of her position were as opposite as is possible to be conceived. Established for more than half a century, inhabited by a large, settled, and orderly population; furnished with large and flourishing cities; in the enjoyment of extensive and remunerative commerce; rich in flocks, and herds, and grain, and blessed with a Government which all the efforts of a few unruly and aspiring demagogues had been unsuccessful in attempting to shake; her peaceable and thriving community were not to be lashed into a belief of local corruption, mismanagement, and injustice; their apathy under such exciting tirades is an unanswerable evidence of their social and political contentment. In fact, no circumstances could be sug-

gested more favourable for the important change that thus suddenly burst upon us; and when the time shall come, as approaching it must assuredly be, in spite of present hesitation, when hundreds and thousands of our starving or struggling fellow-countrymen pour in upon these shores to share the treasures of our golden land, they will find themselves at home again, in all the useful and necessary appliances to safety and good order; they will enter a busy harbour, unsurpassed in the known world for beauty, commodiousness, and safety; land at a large and well-built commercial city, replete with every accommodation, and abounding in wealth and means of comfort or luxury; and in whatever sphere of life they choose to enter, they will be blessed with the possession of one of the most delightful and health-invigorating climates which it has ever been the happiness of man, in the most favoured of earth's chosen paradises, to enjoy. Then who, from selfish policy or greedy spirit of monopoly can resist appealing to the hard-worked, hard-taxed children of his fatherland, to come from ceaseless struggles, such as theirs, to share our easier, wealthier, and happier lot? Not I; although each hand that came competed immediately with mine for the subsistence which I now enjoy. There is room enough here for all—for millions, if they choose to seek their fortunes on our shores. The trackless wastes of our vast interior afford unlimited scope for industrial enterprise: and I, who have wandered over those lonely wastes so often and so long, now look forward in earnest hope of seeing, at no distant day, those yet neglected spots of earth become the fertile and productive habitations of thriving and contented

millions of my own struggling, or perhaps nearly starving, fellow-countrymen.

In the brief notice which this mere synopsis of the events that have marked the rise and progress of the gold discovery affords, it is not intended to give anything in the shape of a narrative of personal adventures, but to make use of the experience of individual participation in the effects of this golden mania, for the purpose of affording correct general information. The object proposed is to convey a concise view of the whole subject, rather than to give the details of those personal experiences upon which that general view is founded.

Three weeks elapsed from the first publication of the gold locality, before our minds as well as our equipments were fully prepared for the undertaking; during this time reports had been unusually busy with other people's affairs, and the various successes and disappointments which had attended the first adventurers were duly chronicled, and indeed it was evident that a large quantity of gold was coming into Sydney, and hundreds of persons were returning disheartened and disgusted, many of whom, it appeared, had never succeeded in getting half way upon their journey. The distance to the gold fields from Sydney was about one hundred and fifty miles, the road exceedingly mountainous, and during rain in an almost impassable state; and difficulties such as these, to persons unused to bush roads, and to the bush fashion of overcoming them, were of course insuperable. Very many of the persons who attempted to work were totally unfit and unprepared for such an undertaking,

and their disappointment and consequent return were reasonably to have been anticipated.

I do not propose giving any journey or proceedings in detail: a general description will convey, I trust, sufficient particulars of this preliminary portion of the life of a gold digger. From Sydney hundreds of parties were proceeding daily; each town upon the road, each farm by the wayside, and every branch thoroughfare from the surrounding districts, contributed its due proportion to the crowd that daily thronged the road to this newly-reported El Dorado. Gentlemen of no occupation whatever, men of undoubted wealth, gentlemen belonging to the various professions, squatters from the distant interior, Government clerks, bankers' clerks, merchants and their clerks, farmers, tradesmen of all denominations, and mechanics and labourers innumerable,—with old men, and even women and children, flocked in one continuous stream towards this spot of universal attraction. In spite of the wide difference of character and habits which in reality distinguished this motley crowd, a strange similitude of uncouth dress, and an equally perceptible likeness of rough demeanour prevailed; and generally speaking these outward and visible signs afforded anything but favourable indications of the order or cleanliness that might have reigned within, but if it did, was very carefully concealed there; they looked the roughest and dirtiest set of vagabonds I almost ever beheld; blue shirts, red shirts, and striped shirts, belts like a brigand's, boots like a Spanish muleteer's, and hats in inconceivable variety, were the visible portions of the prevalent costume; their outfits and equipments too were very nearly all alike; the same complement

of picks, cradles, shovels, tin dishes, and the like, except where here and there some needier adventurer might be seen with sundry articles of late domestic utility converted into makeshifts for the diggings; or needier still, with even no provision at all for the occupation he was entering; but in the one particular of having too large and heavy loads for the unhappy horses whose lot it was to drag them, there seemed to be really no exception. This inequality of arrangement was overcome, however, by the brawny frames and willing help of the human members belonging to these heavily-laden concerns, and pushing behind with saplings and such like primitive contrivances formed the order of the day. In this way many determined parties, with only one horse, took up a ton weight upon their carts, along miles of deep and heavy sandy road, and over mountains so rough and steep, that you are even required when travelling over them per mail, to get out and scramble across on foot in the best way you can; and mail-coach drivers in this country, be it known, are not so remarkable for sticking at trifles in their road, but usually rattle their vehicles over everything that comes in their way, and huge stones and fragments of rock, large enough almost for the foundation of an ocean lighthouse, are taken at flying leaps, as mere matters of course.

Then, too, when night came on and camping became necessary, were to be seen thousands of persons who had never before passed a night out of their beds in their lives, now lining the road and lying on the ground, in every conceivable state of discomfort and confusion. Unused by previous habits of life to the hardships of the Bush, and

unacquainted with the contrivances by which those so-called hardships are best mitigated, it was ludicrous, but in some instances actually pitiable, to see the unnecessary pains they seemed to take to only aggravate the wretchedness of their novel position. My own earliest reminiscences of "camping out" I have, in preceding sketches of the colony, to which this is intended as a sequel, described; and I dare be sworn a large proportion of the gold seekers whom I saw upon the Bathurst road, upon their first and golden expedition, will agree with me that such reminiscences are not easily to be forgotten.

No striking change occurs in the geology of the country along the western road until you reach Hartley, where the carboniferous sandstone—which distinguishes the eastern or coast side of this part of the country,—is displaced by coarse-grained granite, which divides it from the shales, and porphyritic and traprocks of the western interior,—the extensive cuttings on the road exhibit the granite formation very distinctly. The scenery along the road has often been described, I do not therefore purpose dwelling on that subject; it will perhaps be sufficient to say, that from very many points as you proceed extensive and magnificent views of bold mountain scenery may be obtained. The Blue Mountains present, in many aspects, features of stupendous beauty that well repay the traveller for his trouble in surmounting them; but I hasten on to the more immediate subject of this paper, and leaving roadside sights for other pens to dilate upon, proceed at once to the Gold-yielding district.

And here, on the very threshold of this golden land,—

as if Nature had not known how to check her lavish hand,—is scattered so vast an amount of natural wealth, (independent of the gold,) as to stamp at once the important destinies of this great country. In the county of Bathurst limestone is abundant, and very beautiful marbles, for building and ornamental purposes, may thence be readily obtained. Iron ore, also, of a most superior description, exists there in unlimited quantities. Copper, too, is found in large and well-defined lodes, and several mines are being worked with great profit in two or three portions of the district. In the neighbourhood of Frederick's Valley and Mitchell's Creek, rich and extensive indications of this valuable metal are evident. Lead, also, has been discovered, but hitherto, from the absorbing interest of the more precious metals, the prosecution of these inferior mining operations has been of course considerably neglected. Platinum, too, is found, but at present in such small quantities as scarcely to deserve enumeration.

Subordinate to these vast sources of wealth are numerous important adjuncts to comfort and luxury, adapted for the use of a large and wealthy population. The granites and sienites, which here abound on nearly every hill, are many of them exceedingly beautiful, and well adapted for superior building operations. Porcelain clay, for the manufacture of a superior description of earthenware, and the earth for the manufacture of bricks, tiles, &c., and the inferior sorts of crockery ware, can in no part of the world be surpassed. The silex produced by the calcined quartz, which exists there also in illimitable quantities, is admirably adapted for the manufacture of glass of the very finest description.

Native iron is also found, but at present it has only been traced in small quantities, and a metal very much resembling silver, but having the specific gravity of tin, is also pretty generally diffused. (2.)

The general conditions for the yield of gold are in this part of the country also very apparent,—the whole of the *constants*, however, in which a resemblance can be traced between the auriferous cordilleras of this country and

(2.) EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT GEOLOGIST.—In consequence of the metalliferous character of the country now reported on, I have been extremely careful in marking the locality of limestones, from the probability that much smelting may be carried on alongside the mines; as lime is a flux of the highest importance in the reduction of the ore, independent of its other economic uses; very many varieties might be used as marble in the ornamental decoration of houses of the higher class.

The granites and sienites are in many places compact, durable, and beautiful, and nothing but the expense of transit should prevent its being generally used in the erection of mansions and public buildings: it might at least be advantageously used in the basements.

The decomposition of the granite gives rise to porcelain clay, or "Kaolin;" If potteries were established there would be no difficulty in procuring the material for common domestic earthenware, or for porcelain of the highest quality. I may instance as one locality the "Lambing Flat," near King's Plains.

For bricks or drain tiles, it is scarcely possible to find a locality that would not furnish the earth for their manufacture.

It is not necessary to speak of the material for glass making, it being so abundant in the neighbourhood of Sydney. Yet if wanted in the inland towns of this district, there is an abundant quantity of quartz rock, which calcined would produce a silex equal to the making of glass of the best kinds.

Of metals, iron is very abundant and of the best kind of ores, viz. compact hœrmatites, magnetic oxides, bog iron, micaceous and others, exceedingly well adapted for the manufacture of cutlery, especially as the smelting probably for some time yet, can only be carried on by means of green timber, or charcoal, forming steel: in fact, the working of these ores must for a period be carried on after the manner of those in Sweden, Silesia, Carinthia, East Indies, &c., but on the opening up of the country by railroad or other means, when the ore could be carried to the coal districts, or the coal and limestones brought to the iron mines, then probably manufacturing towns may arise in the inland high summit lands, like unto Birmingham,—the highest town in England.

those of either the Ural in Russia, the Sierra Nevada, in California, or in Brazil, needs of course the eye of the practical geologist to detect. On this subject the Rev. Mr. Clarke is, however, an ample authority for its assertion; and as scientifically explaining that abundance of mineral and other wealth to which I have alluded, and affording a fair comparison of condition with regard to Russia, I take the liberty of quoting from the pages of his interesting pamphlet alluded to, wherein he states, "It will be sufficient to say, respecting the Ural, that there are micaceous, hornblendic, chloritic, talcose, and clay slates, and limestones of Silurian age, peculiar granites, binary as well as ternary; sienites, greenstones, basalts, regenerated granite, porphyritic rocks; serpentine quartz veins and dykes running through the schists and granites; copper ores, lead ores, and magnetic iron ore, graphite and saccharoidal limestones; with fossils occurring in trappean detritus, as well as in the altered limestones; these make up, with some others, the chief rocks of the Ural. Of fossils may be enumerated *Favosites polymorpha, stromatopora concentrica, Calymene, Pentameri*, and a variety of others, well known in rocks of the Silurian, Devonian, and carboniferous eras. There are jaspers, hornstones, opals, Lydian stones, epidote, beryls, and a variety of minerals, usually found in rocks of those epochs."

"Now," continues the Rev. gentleman, "in some parts of the Australian Cordillera, the same rocks, metals, minerals, and fossils, have been found by the Author to occur exactly in the same order and under the same circumstances —even that most extraordinary genus *Pentamerus*, exists

here in association with the same genera, *Favosites*, *Stromatopora*, and *Calymene*, which occur both in the Ural and in the Silurians of England.

"Knowing, then, that on the Ural, and on its flanks, occur gold, either embedded in quartz, or buried in various alluvia, and that in these alluvia, or in the vicinity, there also occur the bones of Mammoths; and that gold also occurs in quartz in Australia, and also that the bones of Diprotodon, and other extinct animals of gigantic stature, once as indigenous in this country as Mammoths were in Russia, are found near Mudgee, Wellington, and elsewhere, there was, *a priori*, a ground of conclusion, that gold alluvia must exist here. Nor is there wanting the other condition of actual height above the ocean, for the comparisons of the Ural and the Australian Cordillera. The highest point of the Ural is just under 6,000 feet; the highest point of the Cordillera is about 6,000 feet. Both chains have similar central axes of quartzose and schistose rocks, with transmuted parallel flanks, on which repose carboniferous formations, and both vary in elevations, according to the peculiar distribution of certain members of the composing formations."

I shall not, of course, presume to offer any detailed remarks upon the peculiar geological similarity of condition here enumerated; it will be sufficient for my purpose to observe, that even to the eye of the ordinary traveller, very many of these formations are clearly manifest. (3.)

(3.) EXTRACT FROM A REPORT OF THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL.—Frederick's Valley stream, and Lewis's Pond's stream, both have their sources, as I have stated, in the elevated plateau or coulee of trap rock belonging to the mass of the Canobolas. Frederick's Valley

Proceeding westward towards our modern Ophir, which is situate at the junction of Summerhill and Lewis's Ponds' creeks, it will be observed, that nearly the whole of the country from the heads of those creeks to their junction, is schistose, consisting principally of clay slates, traversed almost continuously by large veins of amorphous quartz; the trend of the water ways from the whole of this side of the country being west into the Macquarie River. The hills as you approach Ophir are nearly all capped with basalt, and some very beautiful basaltic exhibitions are here occasionally to be met with. Upon the table land, at the sources of Summerhill and Lewis's Ponds' creek, the occurrence of that remarkable contact of trap rock with quartz and schists, —which Geologists allege to be the most favourable conjunction for the development of minerals,—is particularly apparent; and not only this portion, but nearly the whole of the Bathurst and Wellington country presents remarkable evidences of the effect of both igneous and aquatic action. The Canobolas mountains—whence the tributaries of these golden streams proceeded, huge masses of trap rock, elevated to the height of 4,500 feet above the level of the sea; and they maintain a relative superior elevation

Creek, at Summer Hill, is elevated 2,912 feet above the sea, and its course thence to Ophir is 20 miles, falling in that distance to 1,700 feet, or 1,200 feet in 20 miles, about 60 feet per mile. The plain of Kyong, where Lewis's Pond's Creek has its source, is elevated 2,982 feet above the sea. The length of the course of this stream thence to Ophir is 18 miles, accomplishing a fall of 1,282 feet in 18 miles, or something more than 70 feet per mile. From Ophir to the junction of Section Creek, at the end of section line B, where the high schistose range approaches nearest to the Macquarie, the distance is 32 miles, and the fall 340 feet, or, on an average, 11 feet per mile; and from thence to Wellington the river's course is 46 miles, the fall 482 feet, or about 10 feet per mile.

to the ranges of the surrounding country—the influence of these mechanical and transmuting agencies being accompanied by the usual results, attributed to them by the Geologists.

It was evening when I first arrived at Ophir, and the sight which met my observation there was one which time will not easily efface from remembrance. Keeping upon the summit of a leading spur from the dividing range, the valley of Ophir Creek, with all its attendant wonders, burst suddenly upon my gaze. A large nomadic population of British people, dwelling in tents, like Jabal of old, (albeit, minus the herds of cattle of that respectable old wanderer,) and submitting to nearly all the privations of savage life, may easily be conceived as an extraordinary spectacle in the nineteenth century, attesting by its singularity—if proof indeed were wanting—the almost omnipotent attraction of gold. Yet there it was, a huge encampment, thronging the acclivitous steeps, which close in on every side the windings of the deep encompassed valley.

Some persons, in the poetry of their imaginations, have thought themselves, upon their first view of this heterogeneous throng, "On dun Cithæron's ridge," and likened its appearance to a medley warrior host before a beleagured city, but I confess that I can compare it with nothing I ever saw or heard of before; for surely no scene nor circumstance describable by human pen, was ever half so wild or in such palpable confusion, unless indeed a mathematical delineation of chaos may be taken as a model illustration of indescribable description. To me it seemed as if in the vagaries of a curious dream, we had suddenly emerged from

the darkness and solitude of a lonely forest, upon some huge desert Caravansari, whose tents, and fires, and hosts of living habitants seemed to have been conjured there by more than mortal power; and, in truth, even upon a more close and circumspect view of the scene, one more remarkable than the whole of these creeks presented, either by night or day—studded with innumerable huts and tents, and thronged by a most singular assemblage of swarthy gold diggers—it would be very difficult to conceive or adequately to describe.

By day the banks and beds of the creeks, at every accessible point, were alive with busy workmen, digging, picking, and rocking cradles laden with their golden soil; forming a striking contrast to a scene, which would otherwise seem to have been designed by nature, in its wildest mood, as one of the favoured abodes of solitude. By night the scene became widely changed, but no less wondrous was it then. Down in the deep abysses of the rugged gorge through which the creek descends, a few secluded camp fires blazed, casting their flickering lights and waving shadows on the rough and troubled waters at their feet; while on the surrounding hills, lately so desolate, a thousand lights were gleaming. Even the summits of the loftiest peaks seemed suddenly to have become the abode of life, and blazing logs, high up apparently among the clouds, were lending their fantastic lights to aid the wondrous aspect of all around. It was a scene more like the work of an enchanter's hand, than the stern and unromantic realities of such natural appurtenances to a gold digger's encampment.

At first the mind is quite bewildered by the startling novelty of everything which meets the observation, and a day or two at least should be expended before you can hope to have become properly accustomed to the change, or to be able to divert your excited attention from the curiosities with which you are surrounded, so as to seriously and soberly assume your functions as a gold digger. To these particulars, however, there are of course wide exceptions. Some people, the moment they arrive, rush frantically off with a tin dish and spade, and honour their proceedings with the title of *prospecting*—others more vigourously disposed, with crowbar, pick, and shovel, fall indefatigably to at every vacant spot of land they find, and dig huge, grave-like holes, large enough to bury much more than the warm hopes and anxious anticipations, which, alas! too often perish there.

These sort of people affect to despise what they term "the tin-dish system," and deem that there can possibly be no other necessary to success than the brawny frame or lusty sinews, which they ply so zealously; and it requires some little experience of continued ill success to enable them to discover their mistake, or to learn how evidently they have thrown away a vast amount of what might else have been most valuable and serviceable labour. It is a very difficult lesson apparently for some capacities to learn, that main strength and stupidness are not the only essentials to success even at the trade of gold digging—at which occupation, however, no unusual amount appears to have congregated, and for which employment, in spite of its real hardships, no disqualification, physical or mental, is ever

permitted to exist; the blind, the lame, and the halt, however incapacitated by their infirmities for other work, imagine themselves quite competent for this, and each and every one throws up his accustomed occupation, and flies off to the gold field, either with or without the necessary implements, outfit, or provision, as circumstances may dictate, relying confidently upon the success which he innocently suspects must attend upon such enterprise. He trusts to fortune for the success which his circumstances will not perhaps permit of his taking the means to secure; and thus it is so many have been doomed to bitter disappointment.

The spot of the discovery of the precious metal, and to which place the labour of the diggers was first directed, was, it may be remembered, at the junction of the Summer Hill and Lewis's Ponds' Creeks, two streams which rise on an elevated plateau or table land, near the Canobolus ranges, and flow thence through the immediate vicinity of those remarkable contacts of trap rock with quartz and schists, before alluded to, as so highly favourable to the development of minerals. Each of these creeks has a very considerable fall to the junction, and forces its way in an extremely tortuous course through very rough and broken country—the effect of which is obvious in the nature of the principal gold deposits distributed along their banks.

At each bend or angle of the tortuous courses of these creeks, sloping and projecting points of earth are formed, opposed to steep and almost perpendicular bluffs of rock. Upon each of those slopes or points, where the force of the current, by reason of the receding angle of the creeks, is necessarily least expended, deposits of alluvia are discovered,

in which drifts the gold and auriferous detritus is abundantly found, each point varying in depth of soil and richness of yield, according to the facilities afforded by its particular extent, by the force and volume of the eddies, caused by the reverberation of the waters from the bluff and almost perpendicular rocks opposing it, and by the particular position and firmness which it may thus afford for the reception of these fluviatile deposits. These are particulars very necessary to observe in forming a correct estimate of the probable richness of any yet untried places; and it is curious to notice with what precision and exact appreciation of every attendant circumstance, the experienced gold digger will decide and fix upon the likeliest spot for the prosecution of his labours.

In my remarks upon the facility with which the practised gold digger recognizes the peculiarities that distinguish the likely spots for the remunerative employment of his labour. I do not for a moment wish it to be supposed, that I attempt to insinuate that the genus gold digger is a scientific animal, far from it; but he is certainly an observant one, and this answers his purpose exceedingly well; but when good luck has richly crowned his labours, your genuine specimen is by no means satisfied with thanking fortune for his wealth, but covets higher fame: he wants to be thought an intelligent rather than a fortunate man, and cannot rest content without that repute for superior sagacity, with which success is usually invested; and the effect of this is often highly entertaining—every such individual becomes at once learned in the sciences of geology and mineralogy. No matter to what class of society he belongs,

or what degree of education he may possess, he discourses learnedly upon those subjects, and illustrates the truth of everything he says by evidences of his own good fortune, and neither Mrs. Malaprop of old, nor our own dear Dame Partington, in the meridian of their glory, was ever more felicitous in their ludicrous mistakes.

The numerous theories upon the subject of the formation of gold, as thus evolved, would be absolutely tedious to enumerate, albeit they possess the valuable merit of novelty. One man earnestly invites your attention to a particular flat, on which he undertakes to shew you a *quart* (quartz) from which, by boiling down, you are sure to get gold. Another takes you to a mountain of decomposed quartz, and gravely advises you to dig there, adducing as his reason for the selection of this particular spot, that goold is always about thom places, where the *kissing slates* (schistose slates,) have been *penurious* (injurious,) to the *quart pot rock*, (quartz rock). A third cautions you against taking all for gold that glitters, by informing you that "them's *iron pirates*," (iron pyrites,) pointing probably at the same time to quantities of mica glimmering on the schist, whilst the invariable accompaniment of titaniferous iron with the gold-yielding quartz in loose and crystalline grains, is usually brought under your notice by the information that "*emeralds* (emery,) always goes with the gold;" and it is to be observed, that most persons erroneously take the titanic iron sand for emery, by which name it is usually alluded to.

As a further illustration of this magniloquent *cacœthes loquendi*, I must mention that I met a scientific butcher at

Ophir, who had found a very rich copper mine on some land which he called his estate; he seemed incessantly talking about it, and flourishing his own deep sagacity in the matter of its discovery; and as to the copper itself, boasting of its extreme richness, he told me that in fact his *hore* was too rich, he didn't know what to do with it; he had tried to have it "*tasted*" (tested,) by every *chemistry* (chemist,) in Sydney, but they could not come up to it at all; it had "bursten" all their "*b——y crucifixes*" (crucibles,) and he should be obliged to send it home before he could learn its true quality. Of course I congratulated him warmly upon his sagacious discovery, and gratefully accepted a sample of this invaluable *hore*. These diverting pretensions, however, in no way impugn the sagacity of observation which the same parties may be seen to exhibit in their prospecting operations, and with which practical means of getting gold they make ample amends for any deficiency which they may display in the theory of talking about it.

The bed of each of these creeks (Summer Hill and Lewis's Ponds',) is found to yield large quantities of gold, particularly of those "pepites," or "nuggets," as they are commonly termed, whose size and great specific gravity have resisted the onward impulse of the rushing streams, and caused them to sink gradually to the bottom; yet it is wonderful to observe to what an unexpected distance the force of these narrow mountain torrents will sometimes carry very heavy particles of gold.

At the immediate junction of these auriferous streams, and upon the "bar" and sloping bank formed by the eddies from their rushing waters, our first Australian gold

diggers commenced their arduous but exciting operations. Success was here pretty general—few averaged less than 1*l.* a day, whilst very many netted small fortunes in an hour or two. Scarcely any fine gold was here at first discovered, but turning up the boulders from the main "bar" of the creek (commonly known as the Fitz-Roy Bar,) for a foot or two deep, and particularly digging at the roots of the Casuarina, or River Oak—which grows abundantly in the beds of most of these creeks and rivers—immense deposits of the golden treasure were revealed. Nuggets of from one to twenty ounces weight, and these not scarce, but lavishly scattered upon the surface and in the clefts of the bed rock of the creek, were hourly picked up, and pieces of from two to nine pounds' weight were also at times brought forth.

But such good fortune as this was not without its drawbacks—the difficulty of working for the heavy gold on so low a level as the bed and "bar" of these creeks, was at this time much increased by the wetness of the season, and the consequently large quantities of water flowing through them, and thus after successive floods, and a continuous battle with this unconquerable element, the increasing population of the mines were driven to spread themselves over those alluvial points or elbows of the creeks, which I have before described, each of which became speedily occupied. Here the gold was found much finer than in the bed of the creek, although occasional exceptions, in the pleasing shape of one or two pound lumps were not unfrequent. The diggers on these points commenced the operations generally as near to the water's edge as possible, and opening a

"face" down to the solid rock upon their respective claims, (mostly a width of from sixteen to twenty feet of water frontage being allowed to a party of three or four,) from which they work upwards into the rising bank, until they get to the extremity of their allotment of this alluvial deposit, carrying the auriferous earth as they procure it to the creek, where they extract, by washing in their cradles, whatever gold it may have contained. The working out of a good claim of this description occupies usually from two to three months, during which time a yield of gold, averaging for the entire period, to each man per diem, of from twenty to thirty shillings, is obtained.

The unsuccessful portion of the gold diggers at Ophir,—and they are not few,—were generally either persons incapable of enduring the fatigue of work, or, more commonly, such as from the number which throng these golden points become excluded from the possibility of obtaining an eligible claim, while at the same time the superabundance of water in the creeks precluded their working in the bed, or low down in the level banks of the straight and intermediate portions of the courses of these streams. The dry diggings subsequently discovered, and which extend over miles of mountain country,—in fact, over the whole series of auriferous ranges, from which these rich fluviatile deposits are derived,—were then altogether unknown, and the announcement of gold having been discovered in the banks and bed of the river of the neighbouring valley of the Turon, more generally although less bountifully diffused than at Ophir, was hailed as a vast boon by a majority of the increasing

population which had flocked thitherward from all parts of the colony.

This fresh and more extensive gold field was first occupied about the middle of June, and offered peculiar advantages to the vast number of people then congregating in those districts. At the immediate place of the location, the gold in fine particles was very generally distributed over an exceedingly large area of land. The valley of the Turon, unlike that of Ophir, is here wide, straight, and open, its hills more elevated and regular, and the river runs, therefore, more smoothly through the less rugged and receding banks, and the alluvial deposits are spread in more equal quantities on either side of the stream. These peculiar features extend for miles along the river, maintaining a width during this distance, varying from one to two miles, thus affording an immense accessible surface for the operations of the gold diggers. The average remuneration was here much smaller than at the rich points at Ophir, not indeed more than from ten to fifteen shillings a day for each man, but it was an average which thousands could ensure with as great a certainty as daily wages; here there were none of the highly profitable slopes and profitless intermediate spaces which rendered the operations at Ophir so much like gambling; a steady day's work at this portion of the Turon produced to every man his fair day's earnings, and a very handsome wage indeed was the certainty of even ten shillings a day to each of the thousands of the labouring population which soon thronged its banks. But this is not the work which seems to suit the gold seeker; he soon lacks in such a mediocre certainty the vast excitement which

attaches to this gambling pursuit, and many left that sure and profitable employment to risk again their luck at Ophir, or to attempt to find other and richer localities. And such were fortunately not long before they were discovered.

Higher up the Turon, as it approaches towards the table land, from which, in common with most of our rivers, it derives its source, that stream becomes narrowed between loftier hills, and embedded between steeper and rougher banks; and here, on a more extended scale were again presented the peculiar and rugged indications which were so conspicuous at Ophir, and, as might have been expected, were accompanied with more than its auriferous wealth.

A rush of anxious speculators soon revealed the hoards of golden treasure stored up in its hills, and most amazing amounts of wealth were thence daily brought forth. To cite individual instances of remarkable success would be superfluous; it may be sufficient so say that very many handsome fortunes were here speedily realized.

About this time, too, the discovery of the celebrated three hundred weight of gold and quartz, upon the ranges near the Louisa Creek, by an aboriginal shepherd in the employ of Dr. Kerr, disclosed the existence of fresh objects of search to the prospecting speculator. The site of this enormous discovery was soon explored, and the country that yielded that beautiful and unexampled mass of wealth at once became the source of occupation to a large and successful digging population. A word or two upon the subject of this wonder of the age may not be inappropriate here. The *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal* of about the

middle of July last thus details the particulars of its discovery.

"A few days ago an educated aboriginal, formerly attached to the Wellington Mission, and who has been in the service of W. J. Kerr, Esq., of Wallawa, about seven years ago, returned home to his employer with the intelligence that he had discovered a large mass of gold amongst a heap of quartz upon the run, whilst tending his sheep. Gold being the universal topic of conversation, the curiosity of the sable son of the forest was excited, and, provided with a tomahawk, he had amused himself by exploring the country adjacent to his employer's land, and had thus made the discovery. His attention was first called to the lucky spot by observing a speck of some glittering yellow substance upon the surface of a block of the quartz, upon which he applied his tomahawk and broke off a portion. At that moment the splendid prize stood revealed to his sight. His first care was to start off home and disclose his discovery to his master, to whom he presented whatever gold might be procured from it. As may be supposed, little time was lost by the worthy Doctor. Quick as horseflesh would carry him he was on the ground, and in a very short period the three blocks of quartz, *containing the hundred weight of gold*, were released from the bed, where, charged with unknown wealth, they had rested perhaps for thousands of years, awaiting the hand of civilized man to disturb them. The largest of the blocks was over a foot in diameter, and weighed seventy-five pounds gross, out of this piece sixty pounds of pure gold was taken. Before separation it was beautifully encased in quartz. The other

tw owere something smaller. The auriferous mass weighed as nearly as could be guessed from two to three hundred weight. Not being able to move it conveniently, Dr. Kerr broke the pieces into small fragments, and herein committed a very grand error; as specimens, the glittering blocks would have been invaluable. Nothing yet known of would have borne comparison, or if any, the comparison would have been in our favour. From the description given by him, as seen in their original state, the world has seen nothing like them yet."

It is indeed much to be regretted that, as a specimen, this enormous block of gold and quartz should have been destroyed, particularly the one piece weighing seventy-five pounds, from which sixty pounds' weight of rich bright gold was extracted, and which, from a description of its appearance, when interlaced with pure and semi-crystalline quartz, must have been an object of peculiar beauty, and its value in that state, in excess of its intrinsic worth, have been considerably augmented.

For weeks subsequent to this discovery no one seemed at all satisfied with his own digging, how great soever might have been his previous success; the hundred weight of gold weighed like a very heavy incubus upon the minds of all. Each man wandered about at strange hours, in out-of-the-way places, mysteriously breaking up projecting bosses of quartz, and prying curiously into the interior of suspicious-looking stones and rocks, expecting momentarily to be surprised with something tremendous in the shape of "nuggets." The blacks, too, a considerable number of whom were always lurking about the various encampments, became sud-

denly the objects of marked benevolent attention—quite pets, in a patronizing sort of way; a spirit of fraternity and aboriginal philanthropy, quite unwonted, pervaded the entire community. Lord Brougham's beautiful apostrophe, "Am I not a man and a brother?" became an exceedingly affecting idea in most people's minds, and many an one of these sable sons of the soil fared for a time the better; albeit it might have been under a vague unauthorised suspicion, that he too perhaps would be sagacious enough to find, and grateful enough to give away, another such a golden prize as that which now disturbed the general equanimity.

For my own part, I wandered about prospecting, and turning over rocks, much like my neighbours, feeling all the while as a friend of mine, of the genus Hibernorum, very appropriately remarked, "prepared for any surprise that might turn up to me." This sort of desultory prospecting, unprofitable as it may seem, (and was no doubt at the time,) was ultimately the means of contributing in a great measure to the several very important discoveries which followed immediately upon this event, and which have tended to establish beyond a doubt the immense richness and almost illimitable extent of our auriferous hills. Fields of matrix gold for the operations of the diggers have been thus developed, which from their vast extent will afford lucrative employment to thousands for years after the fluvial deposits, now so prolific, shall have been utterly exhausted.

To a certain extent, gold had all along been found on the summits and upon the flanks of the mountain ranges, as well as in the ravines, gullies, creeks, and rivers, but hi-

therto it had been found more abundantly in these latter positions, and had, in fact, in such spots been more exclusively sought for—the formation of the country about Ophir and some of the heads of the Turon facilitating its more abundant discovery in such localities. The veins and blocks of quartz, particularly at Ophir, are accompanied with schistose rocks, and these by the action of the atmosphere upon the latter rocks, are left on the steep and rugged mountain sides, topping huge dykes, exposed and tottering, and soon become, by the rapid disintegration of the yielding slate in which they are but insecurely imbedded, so utterly unsupported, that they fall by mere force of gravitation to the levels below, and thus crushed and crumbled in their fall, together with what gold they may contain, are carried away by the succeeding floods, or deposited in the adjacent banks of the creek or gully into which they are precipitated. The great fall of some of these creeks,, the impetuosity of the rapid streams, and the consequent immense abrasion of the soft schistose rocks which oppose their progress, and in which these fragments of gold and quartz are deposited, account in some measure for the distance from their apparent sources, at which many very heavy fluviatile deposits of gold are discovered, and serve to direct the attention of the casual prospector to the spots most likely, from such evidences to prove abundant in their yield of the precious metal. Soon, however, the wealth of the hills themselves became apparent, and the limits thus at first assigned to the gold fields were speedily removed, and wealth to an unknown but evidently vast extent has thus been exhibited.

The numerous and extensive veins of quartz, also, which traverse and intersect so large a portion of the auriferous regions of our western interior, are evidences of such immense wealth, that the capitalist and man of science, who alone, with proper machinery, can work these portions of our golden land with any certainty of profit, may depend that in this one feature alone, when fully understood, and brought to light by experience and by the importation of improved machinery, which English energy and English resources may supply, a mass of untold riches and vast sources of illimitable enterprise will thus be speedily and permanently developed—a result, the effect of which upon the wealth and destinies of this great country it would be very difficult to estimate.

The immense extent of gold in the granite formations of our southern interior, developed by that enterprising geologist, the Rev. Mr. Clarke, affords also a most satisfactory evidence of the vast and permanent wealth of the gold fields of Australia, and offers one of the surest guarantees for the extensive investment of capital in conjunction with the large and legitimate employment of labour. In this particular formation that gentleman exhibits the gold as spread over an enormous area of country,—not as in the quartz, in lumps or veins, but diffused throughout a peculiar description of hornblendic granite, in common with the usual constituents of that rock. Hence, however extensively the gold may here exist, it must be evident that the profitable working of such mines can only be carried on by means of the application of machinery, and by the careful employment of combined and skilful labour. These regions would therefore

appear to be but ill adapted for the single operations of the spade and cradle, and to offer no such allurements for personal enterprise as do the gold fields of our western interior. (4.)

But apart from the speculations of the future, the prospects of our present gold fields are highly encouraging, and the probable extent and richness of which may perhaps be gathered with some approximation to correctness from a consideration of a few of the leading peculiarities in which the gold has hitherto been discovered, and a fair analogy drawn from the conditions in which it is so found, and the nature and extent of the localities whence it is being extracted. A brief summary of these will, I trust, explain

(4.) EXTRACT FROM A REPORT OF THE REV. W. B. CLARKE, M.A., F.G.S., &c.—Whatever may have been the cause why the granitic materials have undergone this alteration, it is not evident that the more porphyritic unmicaceous rock affected it, for that is not in a condition to disintegrate. The hornblendic rock is that which when micaceous readily decays; the hornblendic unmicaceous rock seems less ready to decay: but both are in some degree auriferous, —yet I saw no instances of an auriferous rock which was not hornblendic. I therefore was led to a further conviction of a view before taken, that the gold hereabouts is connected with the presence of hornblende, and is therefore not anomalous as supposed by some persons. The quartz is less developed in many parts of the gold-bearing detritus than in other localities where quartz seems the chief matrix. But in the true quartz porphyry, issuing at the base of the granitic ranges, I can discover no traces of gold, though yesterday I again found it by washing the bed of a creek running over porphyry; and I remark further, that though I have also found gold in the Shoalhaven higher up than here, it seems to me that it is absent where not in the vicinity of granitic rock containing hornblende. Mica, therefore, and felspar, are not necessarily connected with gold, but I think hornblende and quartz must be so, either alone or together.

On entering the creek, which in appearance is in no way different at its head, and in its lateral branches, from thousands of low valleys in granitic regions all over the colony, being a mere watercourse draining smooth grassy downs, I saw a spot marked by the presence of ironstone, and on prospecting, gold was readily found. This iron-

the conclusions to which I have arrived, more particularly as to the probable extent of their auriferous deposits. (5.)

It may be remembered, that on Summer Hill Creek, where it was first discovered, I have described the country as exceedingly broken and mountainous, huge belts of quartz in contact with varieties of trap, with transmuted carboniferous sandstones, porphyries, &c., traverse the vertica cleavages of the slates, and break up into rude precipitous irregularities the surface of the surrounding country, parti-

stone is evidently an argillaceous ore, derived probably from the iron in disintegrated hornblende, and through it there run small veins of quartz, which may have resulted from the quartz in the granite in the same way. The presence of ironstone in this way in auriferous localities is not a local but apparently a widely-existing phenomenon. The occurrence of auriferous ironstone in the limestone of the gullies near Marulan,—in the limestone of Wianbene,—and, as I learn from a specimen brought by Mr. Hargraves from the vicinity of limestone near Jingery, is not without its significance. It extends our views of the gold question. As the gold in the Major's Creek was first made known by a prospecting woman, whom I saw there yesterday, on the 5th October, and is now remunerating nearly four hundred persons within the limit of a mile, it is uncertain to what extent the metal may yet be discovered. Nevertheless, the view I took of the other "diggings" seems not incorrect.

After leaving the porphyry of the Bendoura range, I came upon a rock which might be called a Pegmatitic porphyry, and then to a hornblendic and micaceous variety of it, a passage at last being effected into true hornblendic granite. I have no doubt whatever that the rocks in this transition were metamorphic or transmuted, a mixture of the granite and porphyry. But when I had advanced into the creek, to the point beyond which there is no further progress, I found the bar to be formed of a hardened unmicaceous porphyritic rock, which passed like a dyke of intrusion across the valley, and formed the top of a lofty waterfall into the lower part of the creek. The only change which I noticed in the granite near it was, that it was in a state of disintegration; and this disintegrated soft granitic detritus, or rather granitic materials disintegrated in situ, gold is in great abundance.

(5.) EXTRACT FROM A REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT GEOLOGIST.—I find that the upper part of the Summerhill Creek, above the first falls, contains gold of a heavy grain character, and from the structure of the surrounding mountain ranges (in which quartz is largely developed,) I have no doubt but gold may be found the whole

cularly towards those portions of the creek, from the bed and banks of which the gold was first procured. Here it becomes exceedingly rough, narrow, and tortuous, so much so indeed, that it is impossible to travel even on horseback along its banks, and it is a work of much toil and some danger to proceed on foot along many parts of it. The coarse grains and large masses of heavy and comparatively unabrased gold, which characterise this portion of that creek, and which evidence very clearly its proximity to the matrix whence it must have been originally derived, I have elsewhere alluded to; lower down the streams, as it flows onward to the Macquarie River, and passes through a much less rugged and tortuous channel, deposits of finer gold are met with, which finer particles are also more water-worn, and battered into scales, by their passage over the hard boulders which compose the principal portion of the bed of the creek—proving, of course, that they must have been carried some distance down the stream, and tossed and beaten about from place to place by each succeeding

extent of the creek upon land belonging to Mr. Wentworth, close upon the south side or within the fork, where the Gostling Creek forms a junction with the Frederick's Valley Creek upon a range of 50 or 60 feet above the valley. Gold has been picked up from the surface of the ground principally in fragmentary quartz and ocheous loam.

This gold cannot have been removed far from the rock in which it originated, as it does not exhibit the usual waterworn character. That its original site is in the quartz rock immediately adjacent is evident from the unabraided appearance of the gold and the sharp angular state of the quartz.

Quarrying into the body of the rock would most probably exhibit the gold in veins.

The fact of its being found on the summit of the hills in or near its original matrix is very important; further examination in similar situations may prove its occurrence in regular lodes or veins like the baser metals.

flood, and that the gold diffused along its banks must also have been mainly derived from the rough and precipitous regions nearer to its head.

Bearing in mind the particulars detailed in my previous paper, and following the course of the discoveries to where the open and extensive valley of the Turon was first worked, a similarity in the yield and nature of the gold to that of the lower part of the Summer Hill Creek, before its junction with the Macquarie, will be observed. The circumstances of its more general diffusion on this part of the Turon is exactly in accordance with the wider current and more even banks of that stream, and the character of the gold and the general features of the country alike bespeak the marked diversity of circumstances to which they have been exposed. At this portion of the Turon, and in the immediate vicinity of its principal gold fields, a singular absence of quartz veins is observable; indeed the geology of the whole of the country in the vicinity of the river from a little above Sofala, the present township, to some distance below the Wallaby rocks, where the gold was first discovered, is singularly devoid of any of the peculiarities remarkable in other portions of the gold-bearing country. Small, isolated, and completely detached patches of a very pure white species of quartz are occasionally found on the slopes impinging upon the river, but the general appearance of the country thereabouts is dull and monotonous in the extreme; a line of dark whinstone flanks alternately either side of the stream, but except at the Wallaby rocks themselves, there is really no portion of the river scenery which advances beyond dull mediocrity,—nothing, certainly, according to

my pre-conceived notions of what was necessary to a gold country,—but both higher up and lower down the course of this stream the character of the country materially changes, and some bold mountain scenery, and magnificent illustrations of the vast disturbing influence of the ravaging floods, which seem to have periodically inundated its adjacent plains, and changed the aspect of everything around,—are frequently to be met with. The same may be observed of the Macquarie River, into which these streams flow, and where, as in the lower Turon, and doubtless from similar causes, the gold exists over large tracts of level country, very equally diffused, and in fine and battered grains.

Judging from the variety of circumstances thus briefly alluded to, it became very natural to conclude, that higher up the Turon, where the river was smaller and more rugged, a result corresponding with that which was ascertained on Summer Hill Creek, under like appearances, might be expected; and so it proved, as the immense proceeds of Golden Point (where thirty to forty ounces a day were no unusual yield to one party,) have abundantly testified. And following out these very reasonable deductions, which have been since further confirmed by the Tuena Creek to the Abercrombie River, and by Bell's and Major's Creeks, and other minor tributaries to the Araluen, it will not be difficult to conclude that prodigious wealth must exist in our southern and western interior, when from the extent of the auriferous deposits discovered more or less along the banks of nearly all our larger rivers for several hundred miles, east, south-east, and west, we venture upon an estimate of the hoards of precious metal stored up in those

thousands of creeks and mountain gullies, whence the auriferous debris of these larger streams is evidently derived. (6.)

The whole extent of country as examined along its main western waters, betwixt this portion of the country and the unequalled Gold Fields of our sister colony of Victoria, a distance of seven hundred miles, is undoubtedly aurriferous. The vast table land of the Maneroo district, the magnificent chain of the Snowy Mountains, and the long line of the coast range that traverses the entire distance, afford, from the broken and mountainous nature of the country, innumerable sources whence the supply of the fine fluviatile deposits may have been derived; and imagination cannot attempt to limit or define the extent of time or space over which the labours of our diggers may not here be extended. To the northward, also, gold has been discovered over a wide tract of country, and is now being extensively worked; and although at present not highly remunerative, better things may in due time transpire, and our northern friends may perchance make up in silver what they lack in

(6.) EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORT OF THE REV. W. B. CLARKE. —It is an astounding fact, and one which I am gratified to have been able to demonstrate, that (taking into account other localities in which I know it to exist beyond, though near to, the limits of the Maneero district,) gold is distributed, though in variable quantities, and of small commercial importance, over a region which may be said to embrace an area of 16,000 square miles. In this area I include no portion of country northward of the parallel of Marulan: and I also except the counties of St. Vincent, Dampier, and Auckland: but I have included the trap country dividing the basins of the Murrumbidgee and the Snowy Rivers, because I found gold at the junction of the trap and the slates at one spot, and there were geological data to induce the conclusion that the slate formation extends under the overflowed trappean country; and as similar granites to those in which I found gold elsewhere have been also traced, where my time did not admit of direct search for the metal, I think the area defined might be safely extended.

gold, for that useful (although of course less precious metal,) has been authentically reported as discovered in considerable quantities in the Burnett district.

Enough of mineral wealth, however, is apparent throughout the country to any one who has travelled or turned his attention to this subject, and but little doubt can be entertained that (no matter what may be the extent of our population,) a twentieth century will rise, and almost as certainly I think will set upon the active, profitable, and extensive Gold Fields of Australia. For years to come we have, I take it, more to apprehend from the abundance than the scarcity of this description of gold field; the temptations held out by which are so destructive to those ordinary pursuits of the colony, which require a steady and copious supply of orderly and unmigratory labour.

Many intelligent persons, from California, with whom I

All I now wish to impress upon His Excellency's notice is, that gold actually exists in the localities I have named, and that I have undoubted evidence that it exists in all the creeks and river basins between the various points upon which I have reported already, having employed other means than direct personal inspection to satisfy myself upon the subject. By enlisting other persons in my cause, and by the institution of careful enquiries among persons who have traversed the country on their way to Mount Alexander, I feel justified in stating that, towards the upper portions of the north-western, or commonly called true head of the Murrumbidgee, gold exists. And, that in all the creeks falling to the Tumut, between Big Bugong and Table Top, as well as between the Tumut and Albury, and indeed all the way to Mount Alexander, there is more or less gold, ascertained by gold diggers, whose custom it is to prospect every evening at their several bivouacs; and from examination of whom I have been enabled to obtain information supplementary to my own experience.

The enquiries which I have made since my arrival at this locality satisfy me also that gold is procurable in the whole of the district between the Murrumbidgee, the heads of the Lachlan, &c., and the Cullarin Range, and, therefore, the inference arrived at in my Report of 22nd March, respecting 16,000 square miles of country, is strictly within the limits of the truth, and very far within them.

have conversed on the subject, have assured me that the Australian gold country is richer than that far-famed El Dorado: for although, from the vastly superior streams possessed by California, the extent of fluviatile gold will doubtless there be greater, yet the prodigious wealth and extent of our auriferous mountain ranges, our *dry diggings*, as they are called, far exceed, they say, anything which they have seen or heard of in that country. (7.)

But even our known alluvial washings, although our streams are so comparatively inferior, are by no means to be despised, and they probably make up to a considerable degree in richness what they want in extent. The Turon has hitherto been highly productive, and no perceptible decrease in its yield appears for some time to be probable; while the valley of the Araluen river, below its two main gold-yielding tributaries – Bell's and Major's Creeks,—is exceedingly broad, and gold is found to be distributed not only in the bed and banks of that river, but in very many parts of the valley also, quite remote from the present course of the stream. (8.)

(7.) EXTRACT FROM A REPORT OF EDWARD HAMMOND HARGRAVES, ESQ., THE GOLD DISCOVERER.—I would here state, that no part of Californa which I have seen has produced gold so generally, and to such an extent, as Summerhill Creek, the Turon River and its tributaries; and I have no doubt that dry diggings will be found in the Turon mountains, and in the vicinity of the "World's End," of great richness.

(8.) EXTRACT FROM A REPORT OF THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS FOR THE GOLD DISTRICTS.—With respect to the production of gold in the Araluen Gold Field, I am of opinion, after a very careful inspection, that it is equal in productiveness to any other part of the colony, and but the commencement of a much more extensive digging than any in the Bathurst district. You who have visited the latter district will understand me when I say that Bell's Creek and Major's Creek are similar in position to Louisa Creek, and

The auriferous deposits, which are here in considerable abundance discovered, are associated with the peculiar hornblendic granite before alluded to, as developed by the Rev. Mr. Clarke, and which have been borne down by the waters of the disintegrated rocks, at apparently a very remote period, and in many portions of this river the gold-yielding detritus lies at a prodigious depth below the surface, under a superincumbent mass of subsequent debris, which seems to be wholly destitute of gold. The labour therefore of obtaining this alluvial gold, although a highly profitable employment, is much more considerable than at Ophir or the Turon, and certainly offers, therefore, better advantages for the regular employment of labour than do the variable fields of our own western districts, the working of which savours more of the spirit of gambling than of legitimate labour. The present average earnings, however, are here;

bear the same relation to the Araluen River as Louisa Creek to the Meroo, and the production of Louisa Creek is not to be compared to that of these creek. You are aware that the digging in such tributary creeks is much less certain and constant than in the main waters into which they empty. Yet I am certain that the average earnings of the two hundred men who took out licenses on these creeks are not less than one pound a day each. One party obtained three pounds' weight of gold the day after I gave them the licenses, another obtained eight ounces the same day, and I am aware that several parties have obtained six ounces a day, and several more three and four ounces a day. You will be able to judge as well as myself what is likely to be the production of the main waters, when such is that of the upper tributaries; and when, in travelling down the Araluen River, I found the character of the stream to assume precisely the same appearance as the productive portions of Turon and Meroo—the same height of hill—the same slopes and bluffs—and the same slaty and quartzose nature: and when I found that the only party that had attempted to sink to the bed rock in that lower part of the river had averaged an ounce and a half to three men for six successive days, I could not avoid the conclusion, that the Araluen was at least equal to the Turon Gold Field.

from ten to fifteen shillings a day per man, and ten thousand men would be insufficient to extract the wealth of this one valley for many years to come,—these amounts of earnings might no doubt be considerably increased but for the superabundance of water, which at the season during which they have hitherto been worked, flows through this spacious valley, and which of course has greatly impeded the operations of the diggers. These diggings seem to me to offer eminent advantages for the regular employment of capital and labour, much greater than to the ordinary labourer. Hitherto, it must be understood, that gold has been but imperfectly looked for by the practical digger, except in quartz. It has been discovered and pointed out, however, in considerable quantities in the peculiar granite formations of the Araluen, and in the country extending far to the south of these diggings; also in ironstone, as at Mr. Wentworth's Frederick's Valley diggings; but, in endeavouring to estimate roughly the probable extent of our gold regions, it must not be forgotten, as geologists inform us, that although quartz is the usual matrix of gold, it has elsewhere been found in its original unmoved state, as Mr. Stutchbury informs us, in veins of granite, sienite, greenstone, porphyry, trachyte, and that various portions of this country abound in rocks of these classes, particularly in the neighbourhood of our present auriferous chains to the westward, and it is not unreasonable to conclude, that they only wait the hand of science, or even probably the result of other *fortunate accidents*, to develope them as additional sources contributing to the vast wealth that teems around them.

The gold fields at Frederick's Valley, commonly known as "Wentworth's Diggings," from the circumstance of their being upon the property of W. C. Wentworth, Esq. M.C., present a very remarkable feature in the history of our gold localities. Here the gold is found embedded in a stiff, ochrous, and ferruginous loam, mixed up with fragments of highly-decomposed, cellular, and unabraded quartz and ironstone, with the latter of which it is completely blended. The spot whence it is extracted is situated on an elevated ridge, far removed from the course of any stream, and well above the influence of the highest floods, and from its position and unabrased appearance, the gold has evidently never been subjected to the action of water, but on the contrary, exhibits every indication of the recent application of excessive heat. It is here clearly in the matrix, and promises to be a field of exceeding richness, whatever may be the extent over which it is scattered.

Having been present at the discovery of a spot upon this property, so rich that the proprietor, in order that he might be enabled to dispose of it by sale to better advantage, was induced to peremptorily discontinue his permission to dig there any longer, although each party on the ground was paying him the enormous tax of half the gross proceeds for this privilege, I am able to state the way in which this lode was discovered; and it was, as usual, purely accidental.—A gentleman of my acquaintance was walking about on a Sunday afternoon, some quarter of a mile distant from the spot occupied by the first workers on this land, when he kicked against the projecting point of a large lump of ironstone, and upon looking rather indignantly down, as people

mechanically do, towards the obstruction against which he had stumbled, he was startled to perceive something yellow glittering on the stone; he immediately examined it and found that it was gold, and upon further inspection, that the whole ridge of ironstone, up and down the hill upon which he stood, was also filled with particles of gold, averaging in value as it was estimated (although I must doubt the accuracy of the calculation,) twenty per cent. of the entire weight; or that the stone, of which there were some tons' weight lying on the surface, was worth above twenty shillings per lb. This, however, from subsequent sales, would appear to have been a very exaggerated estimate of its worth. This was but the prelude to the discovery of the richness of the soil in which the strange auriferous ironstone was imbedded, for on searching on the following day, and digging down at the foot of the ridge, the soil was found to be, as the diggers expressed themselves, alive with gold; and although in the finest dust which can be conceived, it was actually visible throughout the soil; and from one quart pot full of the earth—selected of course from what appeared to be the richest part of the lode, and where, in fact, the gold was almost as visible as the ferruginous soil with which it was blended,—ten ounces of gold were obtained. Other tests were also applied, by which it was ascertained that the soil in the richest portions of the hole that was opened contained twenty-five per cent. of gold. This is without exception the richest spot, of the working of which I have had experience; for the soil, from its surface to a depth of three or four feet (the greatest

depth to which the party were enabled to sink during the short time they were permitted to work there,) was full of the glittering treasure.

I have heard of larger amounts of gold having been in a smaller space of time obtained from spots in Oakey Creek and Golden Point, upon the Turon, and have no doubt of the fact; but those have been obtained from pockets in the rock in limited spaces, and where by the agency of water the gold has been collected. This of Mr. Wentworth's is lying in its unmoved matrix, and extends, as far as may be inferred from analogy, over acres of land, and is apparently as rich upon the surface as at any portion of its depth. This gold is found to be exceedingly difficult to separate from the iron or ferruginous soil with which it is so intimately blended; and even when thoroughly cleansed from all mechanical mixture, is found to be the least valuable gold yet assayed. Mr. Porter, in his examination before a Select Committee appointed by the Legislative Council to collect evidence on the subject of a proposed Assay Office and Mint, states that the gold that he has assayed varied from 74 to 98 and a half per cent. The Victoria gold being finer than the standard, perfectly pure and without alloy. That from the Turon contains three per cent. of silver, from Ophir 7 and one-third per cent., and that from Mr. Wentworth's 14 per cent. of that alloy,—this is independent of the small alloy of iron, and sometimes copper, which is found mixed with most of the samples of gold which have been submitted to this test.

Mr. Wentworth's gold fields are now about to be worked by a Company, which is the second that has been formed

for the regular employment of hired labour, exclusive of those partnership affairs formed for carrying on the exsive operations of quartz crushing, or the drainage of the more extensive water-holes in the beds of auriferous streams; and of course exclusive of those numerous bubble schemes which seem to be flourishing just now in England.

It would be beside the purpose of a mere epitome of the leading circumstances that have marked the course of these auriferous discoveries, to enter into anything like full particulars of the working of the system so promptly devised by the Government for the double purpose of revenue and protection; or of reviewing minutiæ which in such a place would perhaps be tedious and unprofitable. The slightest glance, therefore, at this portion of the subject must suffice. Of course it is not to be imagined that this system (excellent as it is esteemed,) is immaculate; like every institution carried into execution by human agents, it must have its imperfections, and in no particular, perhaps, are these defects more manifest than in the facilities which are afforded by these agents for evading the payment of the license fee, or for the practice of making one license do double or treble duty; practices which are not readily admitted by the Commissioner, but which are well-observed practices nevertheless, as thousands might attest.

I do not here allude to the many hundred persons who carry on their digging operations in out-of-the-way creeks and gullies, where official visitation, (like angel's,) are few and far between; but those who, in the thickest of the digging throng, are ingenious enough, by means of two or three licenses among a party of five or six, to thereby monopolise

possession of numerous claims; and to such also as never seem inclined to pay at all, and for whose benefit, it is presumed, the Commissioners generally exhibit so brilliant and conspicuous a uniform. Of course I fully appreciate the value of official gold lace, and deeply reverence the other insignia of office; it gives at times, we all know, an extrinsic air of importance, where perhaps intrinsically there might be none; but in the present circumstances I am persuaded it would be of service to the revenue if this tinsel and conspicuous decoration could occasionally be dispensed with. I have seen not a few curious incidents attending the approach of these well-looked-after costumes, and enjoyed many a hearty laugh at the different tricks and subterfuges played upon their evidently too conscious owners.

For instance, a party of those reprobates, who seem to have a mortal aversion to paying more than they can help, and who have a habit of making one or two licenses do the duty of a party of five or six, have successfully dodged the Commissioner for a long time, but are at length pounced down upon from the shelter of an adjoining ridge. The official approach is sudden and formidable. Flanked by his corpulent constable, with brandished weapons, and decorated with the distinguishing badge of his order, onward comes the young assistant. There is evidently no mistake about him now. Forward rushes the well-known glazed cap, gold lace, leather belt, patent cartouch, and inexpressibles, invisible from excessive strapping. The case seems desperate. What's to be done? They surely can't escape such vigilance as this? But roguery is ever ready with inventive inspiration, and a general commotion ensues.

"Stop!" shouts the Commissioner, as he sees two of the party seize upon tools, and dart suddenly away in opposite directions, one up one down the creek.

"Stop!" roars the obedient policeman, preparing to give chase as fast as a fat carcase encased in an overtight suit of clothes will permit.

But it is evident a run is in store for them, and very uncomfortable running it must be too, with all that exuberance of leather strapping on their nether integuments, but a strong sense of duty impels them, and away they scamper up and down the creek after the daring bolters.

"Stop!" bellows again the short-winded constable, "Stop! or I'll fire!"

"Stop!" rejoins Paddy, pulling up very suddenly, "faith is it stop ye mane? Now thin don't be a houlding that murtherin weppon at the likes of me; sure an I'll stop to plase ye. Bedad now, don't," remonstrated Paddy in a more serious strain as he finds himself violently in the hands of the Philistines, and the muzzle of a pistol in unpleasant proximity to his ear. "Murther, can't ye be aisey now, with yez fist in the scurf av me nick?"

"Come on," says the gallant capturer.

"What for?" says the victim.

"What for? I'll shew you what for; come on:" and with that they presently return to the point whence they had started, where gloomily and thoughtfully, like a young gentleman who had just obtained a dim perception that he had been wofully duped, and was being quizzed and laughed at for his verdant softness, stands the juvenile Commissioner.

"Now, sir, where's your license?" says the Commissioner.

"Ah, where is it? I'll teach you to be coming your cheatery here," adds the self-important constable.

"Is it chatery ye mane?" replies Paddy with reproachful emphasis, and forth comes the important document, undoubtedly authentic, and the Commissioner, who, by the way, had also found the man he captured similarly provided, perceives at once that he has been done, and that all the rest of the party, together with the remainder of the tools, had disappeared during the temporary but efficient diversion introduced on their behalf by the only two men of the party who had a license. Of course it is to no purpose questioning them about their mates; memory is proverbially treacherous, and it is wonderful at times like these how recollection fails; and as to being angry and threatening, why what can be more natural and appropriate than indulging in a constitutional run on a cold morning: in fact, the least that is said about it the better. Such evidently is the opinion of the bystanders, while they indulge their mirth as the crest-fallen officer and his sulky sub. turn moodily on their heels and betake themselves on their way. This is one instance out of the many I could enumerate, but I pass on from such considerations as these to notice briefly the system itself.

This system, devised by the Government in the imperative urgency of the strange and peculiar circumstances in which they were placed by the sudden discovery of these golden treasures, has been from time to time much commented on, and mostly, I believe, by writers whose know-

ledge of the subject has been purely theoretical. It is indisputable, however, that an outcry against it has been made by the diggers themselves, and that the objections thus expressed have found an echo in some portion of the press, and penetrated even the walls of our Legislative Assembly. On this subject I presume, with much deference, to offer an opinion.

That these mines or gold fields are the property of the Crown, to be used for the equal and general advantage of the colonists, must, I think, be undoubted. That the diggers should alone be considered with reference to the benefits to be derived therefrom is an absurdity. The advantage should rather be given in favour of the farmer who tills the soil for the benefit of all than for those, who, heedless of general consequences, neglect and expose to ruin the important pursuits in which they were previously engaged. And in like manner this principle would seem to obtain throughout the entire community. The labourer who stays at home and plies his customary avocations, is at least as much entitled to benefit by these discoveries as the labourer who leaves those operations to dig for gold. This being conceded, the means of obtaining a sufficient moiety of the proceeds of our gold fields for the purpose of revenue become a primary consideration.

Having been amongst the first who witnessed the introduction and experienced the operation of the system of Licensing established by the Government, I may perhaps be allowed credit for something more than theory, when I express my conviction of the entire success with which it was attended; that a better system could not have been

introduced ; and that the amount of the monthly fee or tax fixed upon was rather below than above what the necessities of the case required.

I do not understand upon what principle of reasoning the trade of gold digging should be assumed as so peculiarly the province of the poor, as to require that they should be encouraged in any such monopoly of labour, or why any person, rich or poor, desiring to follow that means of living, should be placed in a better position than he would be in pursuing any other branch of trade or labour. Every mechanical trade, every business and profession has its numerous labourers, whose services remain for hire until such time as they have saved or earned enough to set up in business for themselves—so I conceive it should be with gold digging. It would really seem, however, from the tenor of certain petitions on the subject, that the Government had, *nolens volens*, forced a lot of unhappy individuals into the pursuit of gold mining, and that being now by compulsion engaged at such unprofitable work, the serious inconvenience of having to pay the stipulated license is by every means to be reprobated. Such petitioning is simply absurd ; there can be no doubt that most people would rather pay five shillings than thirty shillings for any given purpose, but the terms being beforehand well understood, and there being really no necessity for any person to enter into that particular business any more than there is for us all to turn grocers or linendrapers, it is clear that those who do not like the occupation as it exists, are at liberty to adopt the easy alternative of leaving it.

From abundant experience I can state, that when men

are at all successful, the one shilling a day cannot be felt; when they are unsuccessful, and have not the means of carrying on the speculation, it is of course a great aggravation of their hardships to have to pay anything; under which circumstances it would of course be better, as in other pursuits, that they should try something else—return perhaps to legitimate occupations, and work, as they have hitherto worked, at a trade which they understand—at an avocation which is profitable. The country at this present moment presents an abundant field for labour, steady, productive, and profitable, and offers the full range of these advantages with a liberal hand, and without the imposition of the obnoxious tax referred to.

The irregularity of the operation of the license fee is another allegation of complaint, but it is one which obviously cannot be avoided; in this respect the gold license is precisely on a par with publicans' licenses, or any other such payments levied by the Government for the possession of any particular privilege.

One licensed victualler, in what is termed a good stand, and with moderate capital and good luck, will realise a handsome fortune. Another, without these advantages, will barely be able to exist, or perhaps will fail; circumstances are against him, and yet each has to pay an equal license for permission to carry on his trade; and who shall determine that this is not, as far as the Government is concerned, a strictly impartial act? Who would for a moment desire that the Government should interfere with a tradesman's private affairs, for the purpose of estimating his profits, and apportioning the utmost amount at

which to tax his gains? Yet this is just what has been attempted on behalf of the gold diggers, with the added inconsistency in the latter case, of the impossibility of arriving at even an approximation of such gains, without so large an array of officers and Royal collectors, as would swallow up not only the profits but the entire yield of gold.

Having now as briefly as the nature of the subject would seem to admit, adverted to most of the leading particulars connected with the gold discoveries, I propose, in conclusion, offering a few remarks upon some of the present, as well as probable, social, political, and commercial consequences attendant upon this vast and sudden revolution.

To attempt any description of the characters and habits of the miners generally, would involve the writing of a volume upon a very curious phase of human society. It may be sufficient to state, that representatives from every grade of society which the colony could produce were thitherward attracted by this "*auri sacra fames.*" I have observed in several descriptions upon this subject, that the very obvious roughness, and unpolished state of manners, and the coarse and dirty mode of living, which obtain so generally amongst them, have been duly chronicled. The cause of all this unnecessary dirt, and the assumption of such rude and noisy conduct, is not so apparent as are its effects, and it is therefore less commented on; but it is scarcely, I think, less evident, upon reflection, why the contact of the opposite classes, which this occupation involves, should, from the adaptation of the employment to those who have been accustomed to manual labour, tend to reduce to their level many of those who, rejoicing in their

new feelings of unrestrained independence, have necessarily to assume in some degree the unusual dress, habits, and appearance of labourers. It is not, however, a pleasing circumstance to admit, but nevertheless, it cannot be denied, that the levelling power of circumstances operates much more readily to debase, than it does to improve; and it is still more melancholy to observe, how even the rudest labourer may be debased by his association with those whose means of superiority are too often—in their assumed equality of coarseness, and their neglect of nearly all the decencies, and certainly of all the courtesies and luxuries of life—thus sadly and shockingly abused.

The greatest excesses in this kind of licentious conduct, dirt, and utter heedlessness of anything but the self-indulgence and non-restraint of so-called independence, are invariably committed by the recently-emancipated dweller in towns—the "gent" of the Cockney school, who seems to feel that the greatest possible reverse to his late conventional restraints must certainly be independence. Extremes meet, and hence his slavish imitation of the unpolished manners of those around him, and in the assumption of which he is perhaps still less at home than in his former town condition. His labourer's garb, although exceedingly comical, may be perhaps a less repulsive form of imposition than his previous endeavours, through the medium of dress, to pass muster as a gentleman. The failure in each case is of course complete; but the consequences of his latter masquerade are unhappily attended with mischief.

It is, however, a great mistake, to suppose that gentle-

men—particularly such as have been accustomed to a country life—cannot compete with the ordinary labourer at his daily works—the fact is quite the reverse; and it is by no means to be understood that gentlemen—real gentlemen, settlers, farmers, and the like—are in any way referred to in my previous remarks, for I have with much satisfaction witnessed the marked improvement which has pervaded the immediate neighbourhood of a few such parties. It is true that the mere labourer will at times affect to despise the "swell"—as he somewhat contradictorily calls him; but it is equally true that this is only affectation; it is, in fact, a well understood acknowledgment of his own inferiority; and as a class they have really much secret respect for him, and an intuitive reliance upon his honour and integrity which stands in marked contrast with their utter want of confidence in each other.

Men's characters, all the world over, are as different as their habits and education. Here—where a more decided tone is exhibited than would be observable under circumstances of less anxiety and excitement—the aspects under which these stronger feelings are revealed are often such as make one tremble for the frailty and corruption of our common nature; yet, in spite of these extremes, the degrees of diversity are none the less observable. I gladly shun the dark side of such terrible revelations, to glance at one or two of the less obnoxious forms in which this excitement is illustrated. A surprise, a sudden discovery of an unusually massive lump of gold, helps wonderfully to disclose any marked peculiarity of character. Observe that quiet and reserved-looking party, who almost seem to shrink from

every passing glance, as if their trade was contraband, and every neighbour was a spy whose observation would detect them. It is highly amusing to watch such a party when they find a nugget. The individual who has this luck may be observed to drop suddenly upon his knees—perhaps he is going to pray, is the first idea which innocently suggests itself to the beholder; but he is fumbling about with his hands in a way which would excite suspicion in the minds of the most obtuse. He surely has found something and wants to return thanks, but does not know how to do it. But no! it is no such thing. He certainly has found something, and that ludicrous expression, that serio-comic countenance is only assumed to divert attention from his attempt to secrete the glittering treasure either in his mouth or in his pocket. The whole of the party to whom he is attached, and who have witnessed this singular manœuvre with saint-like complacency, will for some time after speak to each other in suppressed whispers, or affect, perhaps, *sotto voce*, indifferent topics of conversation; looking of course all the while any persons are watching them, particularly uneasy; whilst the actual holder of the nugget himself seems to be endeavouring to impress upon the idle lookers-on that he is the very impersonation of a martyr; an attempt, the consequence of which, particularly if the nugget is unusually large, and he happens to have put it in his mouth, is often attended with such ludicrous ill-success as at length to compel him to conceal his prize at the eminent hazard of swallowing it.

In strong relief to such as these, are parties less secretively disposed, and who immediately blazon forth their

gains, until the whole creek resounds with shouts of joy, and with the equally vociferous congratulations which greet the production of each golden prize.

But not only is it at their work such revelations are attained;—it is not difficult to read upon each expressive face we meet at every step, the little, but influential history of gain or loss, this tell-tale of the soul pourtrays; briefly their history is told, and keenly are their high-wrought feelings expressed. There seems, indeed, to be but one sort of description, one style of look, one set of technical phrases, for each particular phase of the two extremes of luck—good or bad—which attend this gambling mania; and a half-heard sentence, a passing word caught from the muttered conversation of the motley, bearded, crowd, reveals a volume in the recent history of the gold diggings. What potent fascination but gold could so expose the strength and weakness of poor human nature?

One very remarkable, general peculiarity among gold diggers is the unhesitating recklessness with which they undertake any portion of the labour peculiar to their new employment. In many cases (particularly on the Turon and Araluen) a considerable amount of mining has to be accomplished to enable the workers to carry on their operations, and it is strange to observe with what unequivocal assurance, men, totally unacquainted with such matters, will undertake these very nice and somewhat dangerous operations: the result is of course destructive to life and limb. Two or three very serious accidents have occurred by the falling in of some of these rude and unscientifically constructed excavations; and at best the

attempts are clumsy, and the success arising from them but fortunate accidents. In pleasing contrast to these rude efforts of the uninitated are the admirable spiral shafts, and beautifully arched tunnels of the practical miner—a few of whom, especially Burra Burra men, preferring to work on their own account for a more precious metal, have left the neighbouring copper mines of South Australia for that purpose, and I believe, in most instances, with good success. These men have opened mines deserving of the name, the process of effecting which is well worthy the attention of their less experienced neighbours. Similar abortive efforts may frequently be seen in the numerous attempts to drain portions of the bed of the creeks, in which a vast amount of labour seems very generally doomed to go unrequited.

What may be the ultimate effect of the prodigious change in the circumstances of Australia resulting from this gold discovery, is of course as yet among the "unread events of time." That it will in due season be of immense importance, admits of little doubt; but whether those consequences will be fraught with good or found abundant in evil, surpasses human comprehension. On such a subject the history of the past affords but gloomy pictures for reflection. This golden god of man's idolatry has ever darkened the records of each clime and country in which it has been found abundant. Hitherto it has been, literally, the bane and antidote of man's existence—a fetter forged for freedom—the enslaver of the world. And yet that glorious light of life—the majesty of human intellect—has ever hovered on its troubled track, and

basked beneath its beams. It has been at once an *ignis fatuus*, luring its seekers to destruction, and a loadstar. which has guided and brought forth the genius of civilisation. In former times, its pursuit gave wealth and enervation; conflicting gifts which entailed inevitable slavery; for hardier hordes from less favoured lands, poured down upon such tempting shores, and seized with ruthless grasp, and ruled with iron hand, the people and the spoils which —treasure heaped—lay ready to their hands. In later days this operation has been less direct, but it has been no less certain. The grasping genius of commerce now usurps the ancient attributes of war, and artificial wealth —whose victories, though bloodless, are as desolating and as real—now supersedes the barbarous subjugation of the sword.

How we shall fare amidst those golden baits held out for unrestricted attraction remains to be seen; we have the advantage of the experience of the past to help us, and we are under the influence of peculiar circumstances which almost place these treasures freely in our hands, to use them in our wisdom for our highest good, or to abuse them in our folly for our utter ruin. They may illume that distant future to which we all look forward between hope and fear, or they may darken every promising scene, and sink us as a country and a people, into utter and despicable insignificance. Gold may exalt us into a mighty nation, or debase us into abject serfdom. It behoves us then to guard as far as possible against these contingent evils, and to ive steadfastly to grasp those permanent advantages which seem to hover almost within our grasp, but which demand

our utmost and untiring energies to attain. *Præmonitus, præmunitus!* We certainly are well forewarned, and if we are not forearmed the fault lies with ourselves.

The circumstances of Australia are, happily, peculiarly favourable. We are both rich and poor—abounding in the actual elements of wealth, but destitute of the means and appliances which minister to the luxuries, or to many of the necessaries of life. We are rich in land and flocks and herds, but poor in the means of turning these vast sources of prosperity to the best account; our staple commodities flourish, but manufactures and all the wealth and comforts which spring from labour are at a stand-still. The physical features of our interior remain in their rude neglect for want of that labour which alone can render them productive. The attraction of our gold may therefore raise us from our present difficult position, and people our tempting shores with an enterprising race whose indomitable Anglo-Saxon energy may effectually preserve us either from sinking into the debased condition of the gold-ruined Spanish American, or from being degraded into the brutality of the gold-cursed Californian.

Hitherto, it must be confessed that although we have much to be proud and grateful for in the good feeling on the one hand, and the effective management on the other, which has so eminently distinguished respectively the conduct of our miners and the Government, we, as a people, have not gained much advantage at present from the discovery. It is true that an apparently immense additional revenue has been obtained, and a vast immediate addition to the amount of our exports; but it is to be feared that

these increases will tend—if not alleviated by a large and speedy influx of immigration—to seriously affect our pre-existing staple exports, and embarrass to a serious extent a very large and most important portion of our population. The gold has no doubt added to our present exports by some millions sterling, but this export is the product of labour which was previously and profitably occupied in the production of other sources of wealth, and is, therefore, not so much an addition to, as it is a diversion of, our general exports. It is notorious, that prior to the discovery of the gold fields, labour was exceedingly scarce and dear; and it must be evident that this drain from every former occupation to such attraction, must be attended with serious consequences to the large employers of labour. Besides, exclusive of the comparatively small surplus revenue which our gold mines yield, the advantages gained is individual and particular to the gold digger. to the injury of many—the advantage only of a few.

It is true, trade is not dull, but its extra profits are counterbalanced by the additional expenses which the general want of labour entails. Agricultural and pastoral pursuits are not ruined, but they are seriously jeopardised—the latter may soon become irreparably so. Whilst to those unfortunates who seem by fate, and the so-called advantages of a liberal education, to be always singled out as the most abundant, and least valued class in every community (I mean professional gentlemen, clerks, &c.) the circumstances are cruelly disadvantageous. With no means whatever at their command to increase their incomes, many, and particularly those with families, are

suffering severely from effects produced by scarcity of labour, and the general rise in price of almost all the necessaries of life. To such as these the gold discovery has hitherto been anything but a blessing, and among whom it has accordingly been hailed by many as a bitter curse.

One of the temporary evils resulting from the discovery and the consequent serious addition to the amount of our exports (probably not less than at the rate of six millions a year) is, that it has depreciated our exchange as much as eight per cent., which depreciation falls, of course, upon the exporter of wool or tallow, equally with that of the exporter of gold; a loss increasing with each addition to our gold exportation, which the producers of our staple exports are the less able to bear in consequence of the increased value of labour, the immediate result of the sudden withdrawal by the gold fields of so large a proportion of our labouring classes from their ordinary occupations. This, however, we are told by those who dabble somewhat in political economy, will ultimately be made up to us by the cheaper rate at which supplies from England will be obtained; but of all sciences that of political economy appears to me to be the least understood, and I confess to be anything but satisfied on that point, particularly when the present antagonistic movements of the shipping interest are taken into account, and the evident but most unaccountable hesitation on the score of immigration.

As regards the moral or social effects resulting from our gold discovery, very little can be said in its favour. The passions which a pursuit so gambling in its nature evokes,

the additional anxieties, the restlessness—the care which it necessarily creates; the gradual loss of small accumulations or the sudden gains of large prizes in this speculative pursuit, are reverses of fortune which cannot result unheeded; and the balance of good, it is much to be feared, is here decidedly against us. Extravagance and dissipation swallow up such sudden gains. Want, squalid poverty, and broken hearts and desecrated homes, record the slowly wasted means, which spring from the digger's hard but unrequited toil.

A comparison is often instituted between the relative richness of the gold fields of this country, and those of Victoria: a comparison which I conceive to be very erroneously given without reservation in favour of the latter; whereas the respective returns, if carefully analysed, will be found to yield anything but such a conclusion.

In round numbers, the working population at our mines has ranged between five and seven thousand; our weekly returns of gold between five and eight thousand ounces. The mining population at the Victoria gold fields has ranged between fifty and seventy thousand, and their weekly returns of gold, between fifteen and twenty-four thousand ounces. In other words, with ten times the number of diggers, they have only produced three times the gross amount of gold; which will of course leave an average excess to each digger in New South Wales, over those in Victoria, of nearly four times the amount of gold. In exact figures, each digger averages at Victoria only six pennyweights, or three tenths of an ounce, to every ounce realised by each digger.

The cause of the large population at Victoria therefore, is not attributable so much to the superior yield of its mines, as arising from the prestige given to those mines by the enormous influx of population from the adjoining settlements of Van Diemen's Land and South Australia (each of which districts has been nearly depopulated by reason of this proximity,) and the consequently larger space of gold field occupied, and its gross enormous yield. It will be found, however, as I have stated, that there is no reason whatever to conclude, but that the gold fields of New South Wales are intrinsically as rich, or richer, than those of Victoria. Their ascertained extent is beyond comparison greater; but the circumstance of distance, not only from adjoining colonies, but from the metropolis and port, has hitherto contracted the limits of their occupation; and these circumstances will, no doubt, continue to operate in the same way for some time to come, and the main gold-seeking population be diverted to Victoria. But the mistake must be ultimately discovered, and the eminent advantages offered by New South Wales, be duly recognised and appreciated. With the advantage of knowing both, and with the fullest and most authentic information respecting them, I have no hesitation in affirming that in every point of view, whether social, healthful, or profitable, the gold fields of New South Wales are pre-eminently to be preferred before those of our sister colony of Victoria.

Unhappily, with all her boasted wealth, with all her teeming riches, the prospects of Victoria are anything but promising. The fatal effects of her proximity to the convict deluged island of Van Diemen's, are but too fearfully

manifest. Already do her abundant treasures rise up as a withering curse upon her, and in the anarchy, confusion and bloodshed that prevails, we read a fearful lesson, whose warnings let us not in self-sufficient complacency neglect. Let us not, whilst we record with unfeigned satisfaction, the peaceable and loyal demeanour of our gold diggers, and the exemplary policy manifested in every stage of this business by our Executive; let us not, I repeat, forget, or too carelessly regard, the precipice on which we stand, the fearful gulph into which a little haste or indiscretion, may irretrievably involve us. It is to be hoped that, however smooth and calm the surface may appear, that due precautions will be taken against unseen, but probably approaching storms, which else, in an unguarded hour, may overwhelm us. "A stitch in time saves nine." Sir Harry Smith's official degradation at the Cape, resulted not so much from the failure of his schemes, as from his overyielding reliance on that specious lull, which looks like calm, but bears the rush of tempests on its wing, and which hurled that gallant veteran from his eminence of power, and jeopardised the safety and happiness of the country he governed. *Felix quem faciunt aliena vericulo cautem,*

Nearly twelve months have now elapsed since the foregoing was written, and a vast and progressive increase in the yield of gold has taken place. The mines of our sister colony of Victoria have far exceeded all our most sanguine expectations; and the advancement of that beautiful province, in wealth, population, and importance, has been unparalleled. The revolution of affairs which this great

discovery was calculated to produce, has now been tested by a two years' trial, and with the exception of a little temporary inconvenience arising from the dearth of labour and consequent dearness of all the produce of the country, nothing to injure either public or private interests as yet resulted from it. On all sides of us, the limits of the gold fields are extending, and particularly towards our extremes of north and south, the diggings of which have latterly been most productive. Gold Mining and Quartz Crushing Companies are now in active operation amongst us; in fact, gold digging, in all its branches, has settled down into a regular profession. Population is crowding in upon our shores; trade has increased prodigiously; new banks have suddenly appeared; a Royal Mint and Assay Office are immediately to be established: our warerooms, shops, and houses are all full; our farms all cultivated, our sheep and cattle flourishing, our harbour thronged with noble ships. Steam communication with England and America is accomplished, and every indication of a large, rapidly increasing, and thriving community, is visible throughout the land.

Such are some of the good things gold has wrought in our behalf; such are its substantial earnests of the advancement and prosperity promised for the future.

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